

A S H O R T E S S A Y

ON THE

C H R I S T I A N R E L I G I O N, &c.



ERRATA.

Page 15. line 16, *read* came you—p. 24, l. 5, *read* Maxentius—p. 32, l. 23, *dele* of—p. 56, l. last, *read* tightened—p. 60, l. 6, *read* the—p. 70, l. 12, note, *read* Rabelais—p. 82, l. 8, *read* vetante—p. 100, l. 21, *add* of—p. 114, l. 2 from bottom, *read* Volufian—p. 117, l. 14, *read* difont—p. 119, l. 16, *read* Secularis—p. 125, l. 16, *read* superior—p. 127, l. 8, *read* deportment—p. 132, l. 7, *read* profelytes—p. *ibid.* l. 17, *read* quand—p. *ibid.* l. 19, *read* verité.

LEYRE (FRANCIS)
A
SHORT ESSAY
ON THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION,
DESCRIPTIVE OF THE

ADVANTAGES WHICH HAVE ACCRUED TO
SOCIETY BY THE ESTABLISHMENT OF IT,
AS CONTRASTED WITH THE MANNERS
AND CUSTOMS OF MANKIND BEFORE
THAT HAPPY PERIOD.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED
A FEW OCCASIONAL REMARKS ON PHILOSOPHERS IN GENERAL, AS ALSO ON SOME OF THE OBJECTIONS STARTED AGAINST THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION BY THE FASHIONABLE WRITERS OF THE PRESENT AGE.

THE WHOLE PROPOSED
AS A PRESERVATIVE AGAINST THE PERNICIOUS
DOCTRINES WHICH HAVE OVERWHELMED
FRANCE WITH MISERY AND DESOLATION.

“Avoid all those,” says J. J. Rousseau, “who under pretence
“of explaining nature, sow in the hearts of men disconsolate doc-
“trines, and whose apparent scepticism is a hundred times more
“dictatorial and dogmatical, than the decisive tone of their adver-
“saries.”——(Emile, t. iii p. 101.)

BY A SINCERE FRIEND OF MANKIND.

L O N D O N :

Printed by J. P. COGHLAN, No. 37, Duke-Street, Grosvenor-Square; and Sold by Messrs. BOOKER, Bond-Street; KEATING, Warwick-Street; LEWIS, Ruffel-Street; DEBRETT, Piccadilly; and ROBINSONS, Pater-Noster Row.

M, DCC, XCV.

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T O M Y S O N.

ACCEPT, my Dearest Friend, the following little Essay, as a small tribute of my love and affection. When the state is in danger, you know, that every citizen should take up arms; and when the peace and welfare of society is likely to be disturbed, every man, as far as his abilities will permit, should step forward to counteract the evil. It
was

was with this view that I took up my pen; and tho' conscious of the mediocrity of my talents for the purpose, I could not resist giving you my thoughts upon a subject of such magnitude and importance.

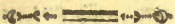
You are sensible that I have not the presumption to set myself up for an author. Thus I hope to apologize for every inaccuracy you may meet with; and to avoid any unmerited praise from the partiality of my friends, I have refrained to
affix

affix my name. If the contents however prove beneficial to you and your family, I shall obtain a singular satisfaction for the welfare and happiness of both lie nearest the heart of, my Dearest Friend,

YOUR EVER AFFECTIONATE FATHER,

AND MOST HUMBLE SERVANT,

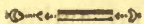
London, March 25, 1795.



A SHORT ESSAY

ON THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION, &c.



IT might be a matter of astonishment that philosophers, who set themselves up for the reformers of mankind, should so bitterly inveigh against the christian religion, were we not certain that two very powerful motives frequently act upon the hearts and minds of men. These are vanity, and the impatience of controul; for as Lucretius says,

"'Tis sweet to crop fresh flow'rs, & get a crown
" For new and rare inventions of our own."

(Creech's Translat.)

"Vanity" says a very ingenious writer, "animates the hero to extend his conquests at the expence of justice, and stimulates the philosopher to erect the banners of error on

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“the ruins of truth.” Experience indeed, as well as the concessions of philosophers themselves, both ancient and modern, prove that the world has neither been more enlightened, or become better for their instructions. In the philosophic works of Cicero we find that the philosophers had no settled or uniform ideas, but were perpetually contradicting and combating each others opinions. Plutarch on the sentiments of nature, which the philosophers held, remarks the same discordant principles. But no author has so truly described, or rather ridiculed their opinions as Lucian in his dialogue between Menippus and Philonides. Menippus tells him that with the view of discovering the truth, if possible, he undertook to read Homer and Hesiod. But he was soon disgusted with them on account of the follies they attributed to their gods; describing them as monsters of debauchery, and adepts in every species of wickedness. “I thought it then prudent,” says he, “to apply to the philosophers. But “I found that I fell from one evil into a “greater, for I discovered so much ignorance, “and such uncertainty concerning matters of “the greatest importance that the most illiterate people seemed to me incomparably “wise

“ wiser than they were. For one of them
 “ told me that all happiness consisted in the
 “ free use of our passions: others affirmed
 “ that we should not give way to our pleasures,
 “ but labour and suffer courageously. One
 “ party said that I was to hold gold and silver
 “ in contempt; another maintained that the
 “ possession of them was real happiness. When
 “ they came to descant upon the formation
 “ of the world, they talked of atoms, empty
 “ space, of bodies without substance and many
 “ other unintelligible matters. But that
 “ which disgusted me the most was to find
 “ them all so dogmatical in their opinions;
 “ thus what one affirmed to be cold, the other
 “ maintained to be hot. Wherefore I knew
 “ not what to think, or what to say. However
 “ the height of extravagance, as it appeared
 “ to me, was the pointed contradiction I per-
 “ ceived between their doctrines and their
 “ practice. One party, who were all usurers,
 “ declaimed against riches; another repro-
 “ bated fame and glory, yet were perpetually
 “ in quest of both. They were in general
 “ violent in their invectives against such per-
 “ sons as gave themselves up to illicit pleasures,
 “ and yet in private they were themselves the
 “ most debauched.”

Hermias, nearly at the same period of time, though not so severe a satirist as Lucian, does not speak more favorably of the philosophers. "I inquired", says he, "what they supposed the nature of the soul to be. Democritus assured me that it was fire; the Stoics maintained that it was air; Heraclitus declared it to be motion; Pythagoras called it a shade; Hippo insisted that it was seminal water; Democrates affirmed it to be har- mony; Critias contended that it was blood; others a vapour which comes from the stars, &c. &c. Each of them had his peculiar jargon, but not one of them seemed to know the truth. My next inquiry was to know what becomes of the soul. Some of the philosophers supposed it to be immortal, others perishable. Some affirmed that it survives the body for a while; others that it is immediately reduced to atoms. Many contended that it inhabits the bodies of beasts; and others that it survives the human body for three thousand years. Sometimes therefore I am immortal, and consequently feel myself happy; then I am mortal, which afflicts me. Sometimes I am air, water, fire, and at last nothing of all these, but I become a fish, a reptile, a wild beast,

" or

" or some other quadruped; and when I meet
 " a man, I know not whether to call him an
 " ox, a dog, or what not. Finally Empedo-
 " cles, improving upon all these fine systems,
 " turns me into a tree, or into a bush. Such
 " only is the information I have been able to
 " acquire from the philosophers," (*Irrisio*
Philosoph.

It may be asked if we can get better in-
 formation from the philosophers of the pre-
 sent day. Let J. J. Rousseau, that eccentric
 genius, answer the question. " Under the
 " haughty pretext," says he, " of being the
 " only persons who are truly enlightened,
 " honest and sincere, they subject us to their
 " magisterial decisions, and give us for the
 " true principles of things only unintelligible
 " systems which they have raised in their own
 " imaginations. Add to this, that while they
 " overturn, destroy and trample under foot
 " every thing that is respectable among man-
 " kind, they deprive the afflicted of the last
 " consolation in their misery; take from the
 " rich and powerful the only check to the in-
 " dulgence of their passions; they eradicate
 " from our hearts the remorse of guilt and the
 " hopes of virtue; absurdly boasting them-
 " selves at the same time the friends and bene-
 " factors

“factors of mankind. The truth, they say, can never be hurtful. So far I am of their opinion; and this is to me a great proof that what they teach cannot be true.” (*Emile*, t. iii. p. 149.)

The impatience of controul, as has been observed, acts also very forcibly on the hearts and minds of men. The obscurity of the mysteries, which the christian religion proposes to our belief, is only a pretext for their incredulity. It may therefore be presumed that they would believe without difficulty, and even without reflection, if a bare assent was sufficient to attain the end proposed. But “why were mysteries requisite?” exclaims John Jacques Rousseau. He has answered the question himself. The divine nature is essentially incomprehensible, because it is infinite; whence, he affirms that “our understanding being limited, hath no conception of any thing without bounds. Whatever is called infinite confounds us.” (*Emile*, t. iii. p. 80.)

But have these advocates for the reformation of mankind duly considered the state of the world before it was blessed by the christian dispensation; what it is likely to be again, (for the same causes have the same effects) and what it has been since the establishment of

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of it? What it will degenerate into, we evidently see by the distracted state of France: There indeed they have exceeded the pagans themselves in absurdity and wickedness. The heathens punished atheism with banishment and death. They not only deemed those to be atheists, who in general denied the existence of the Gods, but all such as did not acknowledge the local deities of the places they inhabited. They accounted them pests to society, and treated them accordingly. The histories of Greece and of Rome afford ample information on the subject. They did not therefore bury virtue and vice in the same grave by denominating death an *eternal sleep*. Abstracting from their religious creed, they were too wise and politic to admit such dangerous doctrines; dangerous in fact, for no man's life or property would in that case be secure. Both would be at the mercy of every villain, whom nothing might deter but the lash of the law, which he might hope to evade. Death, in the opinion of the heathens, was not an *eternal sleep*, but like unto sleep, which conveys a very different idea. This is elegantly expressed by Virgil in his description of hell, which plainly proves that a future state was generally admitted in his days.

“ At

“ At hell’s dread mouth a thousand monsters wait,
 “ Grief weeps, and vengeance bellows at the gate :
 “ Base want, low fear, and famine’s lawless rage,
 “ And pale disease, and slow repining age.
 “ Fierce formidable fiends! the portal keep,
 “ With pain, toil, death, and death’s *half-brother* sleep.

(*Pitt’s Translat.*)

When M. de Beaurepaire, the governor of Verdun in 1792, was obliged by the garrison to surrender the town to the enemy, he took a pistol, and shot himself. This action appeared so meritorious in the eyes of the national assembly that they ordered his remains to be deposited in the Pantheon at Paris. “ Let us,” said they, “ honor
 “ the death of Beaurepaire with our grief;
 “ and set aside, in favor of justice and
 “ gratitude, that barbarous prejudice which
 “ hitherto has stigmatised the self-devote-
 “ ment of Cato * and Brutus as acts of fury
 “ and

* It was pride in the most superlative degree, which made him commit that rash action;

“ Hence blind to truth, relentless Cato died,
 “ Nought could subdue his virtue but his pride.”

(*Essay on Satire.*)

Did he however intend to act conscientiously, and to do the thing he supposed right? If so, why did he not exhort his son and his friends to follow his example? on the contrary,

“and madness.” “Death,” they added, “is a resource of which oppressed virtue ought not to be deprived*.” The heathens however in general thought otherwise.

“The next in place,” says Virgil, “and punishment
“are they

“Who prodigally threw their lives away.”

(*Dryden's Translat.*)

Though these ideas concerning a future state, so congenial to every person of the least reflection, were generally adopted by the ancient world till they became infected by the Epicurean doctrines, which introduced atheism, and was finally the cause of the destruction of that † republic, yet there were
such

contrary, he advised them to accept the clemency of Cesar, which was equally offered to himself. Brutus at one time disapproved of Cato's principles respecting suicide, yet was guilty of it himself. Why? because he had no alternative but to die by his own hands, or grace the triumph of Augustus, which must end in the most cruel and ignominious death. But Beaurepaire had nothing of all this to fear. His life and humane treatment were secured by the law of nations; a beneficent law, for which we are indebted to christianity.

* See the journals printed by their orders.

† “At this period the Roman senate,” says M. de Voltaire. (*Dict. Phil. art. Atheist*) “were truly an assembly

such variations and such uncertainty in their opinions on this and other subjects of the kind, that the wisest of their philosophers candidly confessed the inutility of all their researches to find out the truth, and the need they stood in of a divine revelation for that purpose. Plato, the greatest genius Greece ever produced, despaired of ever knowing the origin and destination of man, "unless" says he, "a more certain way be given us, as some promise, or a divine revelation, that relying on it, as on a vessel that runs no risk, we may happily finish the voyage of our life." The same philosopher, in his second dialogue between Socrates and Alcibiades, asserts that "we must wait patiently till some one appears who may be capable of instructing us in the manner we ought to behave towards the gods and towards men."—"It would be better," he adds, "to withhold our sacrifices, than not to know, if by offering them, we shall please or displease the Deity." In his *Phedo*, or treatise on the soul, and in his

bly of atheists. The conquerors and legislators of the world were visibly a society of atheists. They finally ruined the republic." May not the same remark be made on the French legislators of the present day?

Epinomis

Epinomis he acknowledges the same necessity of a superior guide. Cicero, in his Tusculan Questions, laments the weakness of the light of nature, and the almost inevitable danger of being led astray by vulgar errors, and by the general corruption of things.

After the humble confession of such philosophers we shall not be surprised that the heathens fell into such monstrous extravagances and absurdities, both religious and moral; such as would hardly be credited, if they were not transmitted to us by themselves. Though painful to relate, they afford a most useful lesson. They remind us of that gratitude with which every breast ought to be impressed towards a religion which has enlightened the minds of mankind, and withdrawn them from the folly of their former practices.

Many acts which are repugnant to moral virtue and innate decency we find to have been authorized by their laws, inculcated by their philosophers, and made sacred by their religion, even amongst the Greeks and Romans, the politest people of the ancient world. The inhumanity with which they treated their slaves; the barbarous and un-natural combats of their gladiators, the extortions of the usurers, the continual subversion of their states,

the frequent assassinations of their princes, and finally the shocking extravagance of idolatry will likewise surprise and astonish us. Each article shall be treated separately, and in as concise a manner as possible; and it will be shown, at the conclusion of each, that the abolition of these horrid and inhuman customs was the fruit of the gospel.

ARTICLE I.

Who would believe that such renowned philosophers as the divine Plato and the wise Plutarch should be the abettors of those infamous * crimes which not only disgrace human nature, but are an outrage to it. It is impossible to read the dialogues of Pausanias and Alcibiades in the feast of Plato without horror and disgust. Notwithstanding his address, we easily perceive that this divine Plato is conscious of the infamous lessons which he inculcates. As for Plutarch, in the very work wherein he prescribes rules for the edu-

* A first-rate philosopher, Mr: de Voltaire, calls these horrid excesses *insipid trifles*, (*fadaïses* in French). Such is the light tone the author assumes in his philosophical works by way of reforming mankind!

cation of youth, he hesitates if he shall recommend those very crimes or not; and, after weighing the matter, decides in the affirmative. Indeed, he says, that "he is tender of
 " being the persuader and encourager of such
 " practices, but is determined in his opinion
 " by Socrates and Plato, by Xenophon, Æschines and Cebes, with a whole groupe of
 " such other men*." Seneca informs us of the prodigious number of victims which were sacrificed to this detestable passion; and he declaims against it with the greatest force and energy†. In Lampridius we read that the Emperor Alexander Severus did not dare attempt to remedy this evil on account of the numbers who gave into it‡.

How shall we describe the injury done to decency by the public prostitutions, which were reckoned the most solemn duties of their religion? In Babylon, the women dressed in their best attire, offered themselves to every

* See Plutarch's morals translated by Dr. Simon Ford, vol. 1. p. 30.

† Epist. 95. p. 601.

‡ The reader will be pleased to observe that the passages extracted from the Roman historians are taken from the folio edition presented by King George I. to the university of Cambridge.

stranger they met. The money arising from this infamous traffic was destined to maintain the temples of Venus*. In Armenia, slaves of both sexes were sacrificed to this obscene goddess, and young ladies of quality were not permitted to marry till they had devoted themselves to prostitution for a certain time†. The same custom prevailed in Lydia, as Herodotus reports. In describing the sepulchre of Aliyattus, the father of Ctesus, he says that the daughters of the Lydians are accustomed to acquire their dowries by prostitution, and then they are permitted to marry as they please‡. In Phenicia, the women had their choice either of submitting to certain superstitious ceremonies in honor of Adonis, or of admitting for a whole day every stranger who chose to approach them. The profits arising from this religious traffic were also consecrated to Venus§. Strabo informs us likewise that there was an incredible number of women in Corinth dedicated to this obscene goddess||.

* Strabonis Geographia, lib. xvi. p. 745.

† Ibid. lib. xii. p. 532.

‡ Vol. i. p. 61.

§ Lucian de Dea Syria, p. 1058.

|| Lib. viii. p. 378.

The indecencies exhibited in the Floral games are largely described by Valerius Maximus. He tells us that Cato being present at those which Messius the Ædile exhibited, the people were ashamed to order the actors to strip themselves naked. Cato, perceiving this, withdrew; lest his presence should prevent the usual entertainment from taking place*. But would not this wise Roman have done better, either to have absented himself from those games, or to have staid there, as his presence was a restraint upon the licentiousness of the people? This is much what Martial thought. "Why, says he, putting the question to Cato, " did you appear at " those games? Come you into the theatre " only to go away again?

" Cur in theatrum, Cato severe, venisti?

" An ideo tantum veneras, ut exires?"

Theocritus sings the praises of those who excelled in lewdness†.

Anacreon and Horace paint in glowing colours the excesses of the Greeks and Romans in this respect. Even Cato, the wise, the severe Cato, carried on a scandalous traffic

* Lib. 2. p. 202.

† Idil. 12. p. 162, &c.

with his beautiful slaves. At Sparta, on certain days of the year, it was usual for both sexes to exercise and dance naked together. "The laws of that republic," says Montequieu, "not only deprived parents of all natural feelings, but also stripped chastity of modesty." Their laws also permitted the promiscuous use of women, whether married, or unmarried. It was also practised in other Grecian states. There are even examples of it in Rome. Yet to shew how unjust and inconsistent some of the Roman laws were, we need only mention that against adultery. If a wife was taken in adultery, the husband might kill her without any form of law, whilst the law gave no power to the wife to obtain satisfaction for her husband's irregularities. Plutarch thought this law, as well as that which authorises the husband to kill his wife, if she drank wine, to be very cruel; nevertheless they were conformable to the laws of Romulus. The original words are. "In adulterio uxorem tuam si deprehendisses, *impunè* necares: si illa te adultereres, digito contingere non auderet."

But why dwell longer on such infamous scenes, when, from the few specimens adduced, we may form so compleat a judgment of the

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the manners and customs of mankind before they were blessed with the knowledge of the christian dispensation? No sooner did it prevail, than we see Constantine, the first of the Christian emperors, issuing a severe law (*cum vir in fœminam nubit*) against those horrid and infamous practices. The mysterious rites of paganism being proscribed, public decency began to be respected. First proof of the advantages which have accrued to society by the establishment of christianity.

As Constantine, so justly stiled *the great*, notwithstanding the cavils of modern philosophy, had by his authority in a great measure suppressed the flagrant disorders and abuses to which paganism gave birth, and as he openly professed himself the protector of the christians, it will not be surprising that he should be severely censured by M. de Voltaire; whose uniform plan seems to have been not only to depreciate the christian religion itself, but likewise all those who were zealous in supporting it. It may not therefore be unacceptable to the reader if a short sketch be given of that Emperor's life and actions in the first place, and secondly a detail of those defects in his character and conduct, which the French philosopher has imputed to him.

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Flavius

Flavius Valerius Constantine was the son of Constantius Chlorus and Helena. He was born in the year 274, and attended his father on his death-bed at York. As soon as that event took place, he was saluted Emperor by the Roman troops who were with him, anno 306. Maximian Galerius, one of his father's associates in the empire, would agree only to his taking the title of Cæsar, to which he acquiesced. This however did not prevent him from being the sovereign of all the Gauls, Great Britain and Spain. He took the title of Augustus in the year 308 by the consent and approbation of the two other Emperors, his colleagues, after having gained several victories over the Franks and the Germans. It is reported of him that he had taken an early predilection for the christian religion, and that he was finally encouraged to adopt it by the miraculous appearance of a cross in the clouds with the following inscription, *In this sign you shall conquer.* Be that as it may, he defeated Maxentius, against whom he was then marching. By this victory, Constantine became master of all Italy and Africa. He immediately caused a standard to be made with the representation of a cross, under which were affixed the abovesaid words. This standard

dard he ordered to be carried at the head of his army. He afterwards defeated Licinius, and caused him to be put to death. By the death also of Licinian, he became sole master of the empire. He forbid any further persecution of the christians, and submitted to be ranged himself among the catechumens to be instructed in the tenets of the gospel. He constructed both in Rome and in other parts of the empire several magnificent churches and other public edifices, which he endowed in a manner worthy of himself. Having built the city of Byfantium, he ordered it to be called Constantinople. His zeal for the preservation of the christian faith in all its purity was as great, as were his attentions to govern the empire with equity and justice. He made the greatest efforts to extinguish the heresy of the Donatists at the council of Arles. Soon after he published an ordinance for the strict observance of the Sunday, commanding every person to abstain from servile work on that day. He assisted at the first general council at Nicea, wherein Arius was condemned. The expences of the prelates who attended at the council, were defrayed by him, and he kissed the wounds of those who had suffered for their faith during the persecutions of Li-

cinus. Constantine however has been censured for his partiality to his sister Constantia who was a favorer of the Arians, also for having confided to ministers who betrayed the interests of his people, and for not punishing them when convicted of peculation. He is likewise censured for putting his son Crispus to death. It may be supposed that the pagan historians would not overlook entirely the defects and blemishes in the character of a man, who had shown such a visible partiality for the christian religion, and consequently a dislike for that of the empire. Yet in other respects, they speak highly of his great qualities, particularly of his courage and knowledge in the military art. He died at Achyron near Nicomedia on the 22d of March, 337, at 63 years of age. Such are the outlines which contemporary historians give of him. Let us now attend to his character, as it is transmitted to us by the pen of M. de Voltaire.

“Constantius Chlorus,” says he, (*Mélanges, chap. lxi.*) “was in a remote part of England, “where for some months he had assumed the “title of Emperor. Constantine was at that “time at Nicomedia with the Emperor Galerius. He requested permission to go to
see

" his father. Galerus made not the least dif-
 " ficulty. Finding his father at the point of
 " death, he got himself acknowledged Empe-
 " ror by the troops, who were then in Eng-
 " land. The election of a Roman Emperor
 " made at York by five or six thousand fol-
 " diers could not poffibly be thought lawful
 " at Rome. The fanktion of the *Senatus popu-
 " lusque Romanus* was at leaft wanting. The
 " Senate however, the people, and the Preto-
 " rian guards chofe Maxentius, the brother of
 " that Faufta, whom Constantine had mar-
 " ried. Our hiftorians, who always fide with
 " the fortunate, call Maxentius a tyrant, and
 " an ufurper. Being a pagan, of courfe, they
 " represent him in the blackeft colours."
 So far M. de Voltaire.

Constantius Chlorus, fays he, *was in a remote*
part of England, where for fome months he had
affumed the title of Emperor. It feems as if
 M. de Voltaire by this period wifhed to infi-
 nuate that this Emperor had affumed the title,
 nobody knows how, in a remote part of Eng-
 land. When he attempts to diminifh the
 number of martyrs, he pretends that there
 were none for a confiderable time either in
 Spain, the Gauls, in England, or in a part of
 Germany, all of which were under the domi-
 nion

nion of Constantius Chlorus, the avowed protector of the christians. Here he makes him a very potent and puissant prince. But when he represents him as the father of Constantine the great, he speaks of him in a contemptuous manner, as if he was banished in a remote and sequestered part of England. Notwithstanding this bold assertion, the Roman historians assure us that he was created Cesar above thirteen years before his death, and Emperor and Augustus above a year and a half before that period. "Constantine" says the French poet, "requested permission to go and see his father. Galerius made not the least difficulty." It appears however by the testimony of Aurelius Victor,* that he wished to detain him, which obliged Constantine to escape privately. The author of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire adopts M. de Voltaire's opinion, and says (page 404, note 10) that "Zorimus † tells a very foolish story

* Sextus Aurelius Victor. He served under the Emperor Julian, and from a very low condition, raised himself by his merits to the first employments in the state.

† A Greek historian. He was a pagan, and lived about the year 410. Only five or six books of his history of the Emperors are extant. He never loses any opportunity of declaiming against the christians, and was in particular the professed enemy of Constantine.

of

"of Constantine causing all the post-horses
 "which he had used to be hamstrung. Such
 "a bloody execution, without preventing a
 "pursuit, would undoubtedly have occasioned
 "suspicions that might have stopped his jour-
 "ney*." Foolish as the story may appear to
 him, he might have remarked that Aurelius
 Victor mentions the fact also. (vol. i. p. 633.
 "Constantine procured himself to be acknow-
 "ledged Emperor by the troops who were in
 "England. The election of a Roman Empe-
 "ror made at York by five or six thousand
 "soldiers could not possibly be thought law-
 "ful at Rome." The Roman historians say
 that he was saluted Emperor by the troops
 on the very day of his father's death. Ne-
 vertheless he would not accept the title till
 he had got the consent of Galerius, of whom
 he demanded it. Galerius refused his request,
 and would only permit him to take the title
 of Cesar, to which Constantine acquiesced.
 Such an instance of moderation and greatness
 of soul, which made him prefer an inferior
 title, rather than cause a civil war, was till
 then unprecedented. This laudable example
 however had no effect fifty years afterwards
 over the conduct of Julian the apostate, the

* All the references to this work may be found in the first quarto edition.

great hero of M. de Voltaire. His conduct was quite the reverse. "The election of a Roman Emperor made at York could not be thought lawful at Rome. The sanction of the *Senatus populusque Romanus* was at least wanting." * Eutropius however assures us that in those days they put little or no stress upon the consent of the Senate and the Roman people for taking the government of the empire. Arms alone decided the contest. The choice also of the Senate, the Roman people and the Pretorian guards in favor of Mexentius is unfounded, though servilely copied by the author of the Decline and fall of the Roman empire. "Mexentius" says he, (vol. i. p. 409.) "invested with the imperial ornaments was acknowledged by the applauding Senate and people as the protector of Roman freedom." The historians of those days, who recount this event, declare in express terms that he was chosen by the Pretorian guards alone, who had collected a mob for that purpose, without giving the least hint of the interference of the Senate. (See Eutropius, vol. i. p. 660.)

"The money and the arms of the Christians" says M. de Voltaire, "contributed

* He was an officer in Julian's army. We have an abstract of the Roman history in ten books written by him.

"to place Constantine on the throne. It was
 "this which rendered him odious to the se-
 "nate, to the people of Rome and to the Pre-
 "torians who had all espoused the cause of
 "Maxentius his competitor." That the se-
 nate did not espouse his cause has been evi-
 dently shown. It was, as has been said, ef-
 fected only by the dregs of the people, and an
 insurrection of the Pretorian guards. No
 author whatever makes the least mention
 that the christians contributed either by arms
 or money to set Constantine upon the impe-
 rial throne. They tell us however that the
 people assembled in the Circus gave him the
 title of *invincible*, in the very presence of Max-
 entius. We are also informed that Constan-
 tine gained immortal honor for the four victo-
 ries he obtained at Turin, Brescia, Verona,
 and under the walls of Rome, and that he was
 beloved for his clemency towards the van-
 quished. We read also * that he released
 several

* Eumenes, in his panegyric on Constantine the great.
 He was contemporary with that Emperor. The author
 of the Decline and Fall, &c. asserts, p. 417. note 35. that
 "Eumenes has undoubtedly represented the whole affair
 "in the most favorable light for his sovereign. Yet
 "from his partial narrative we may conclude that the

E

" repeated

several senators who had been imprisoned, and recalled others who had been driven into banishment, but no where do we find that his conduct rendered him odious to the senate, the people of Rome, and the Pretorian guards; or that the money and the arms of the christians contributed to place the diadem on his head. All these are anecdotes forged in the brain of the French poet. In the next place M. de Voltaire censures the deportment of Constantine at the council of Nicea, and in particular the splendid appearance he made at that assembly. "We find him" says he, "convoking and opening the council, marching through the midst of the fathers with the diadem on his head, and his robes all covered with precious stones; taking to himself the most exalted state; banishing sometimes Arius, at others Athanasius. He set

" repeated clemency of Constantine, and the reiterated treasons of Maximian, as they are described by Lactantius, and copied by the moderns, are destitute of any historical foundation." Aurelius Victor and Eutropius, both pagan historians as has been observed, *positively* speak however of the reiterated treasons of Maximian towards Constantine, and in consequence that he justly deserved his death. (pages as above.)—What authentic information can the reader acquire from modern philosophy?

" himself

" himself at the head of the christians, with-
 " out being a christian himself; *for in these*
 " *early days, such were not deemed christians who*
 " *had not been baptized.*" To pass over the
 absurdity of this last passage, it may be asked
 why he should censure Constantine for ap-
 pearing in all the pomp and grandeur of Ma-
 jesty at such an august assembly, as that coun-
 cil certainly was? Could there be one more
 so, wherein above 300 prelates were assem-
 bled, many of whom bore the marks of their
 sufferings for their faith? Is it not usual for
 princes to go in great pomp and state to great
 assemblies? But "he was all covered with
 " precious stones." So was Dioclesian, to
 whom M. de Voltaire imputes it not as a
 crime. Moreover he would have himself
 adored as a God, (as Eutropius informs us,
 p. 660.) of which that French writer takes no
 notice. He adds that " he opened the coun-
 " cil, and put himself at the head of it with-
 " out being a christian himself." Eusebius
 of Cesarea, and Theodoret, both better judges
 of the transactions of those days than M. de
 Voltaire, assure us that Constantine appeared
 at the assembly with the utmost respect for the
 fathers; that he expressed in the warmest
 terms the joy he felt at seeing the heads of so

many churches assembled together, and rejoiced that he was able to afford them his protection and support. The banishment of Arius was in consequence of the anathema pronounced against him by the council. Athanasius was exiled through the intrigues of Eusebius of Nicomedia, who was a hidden Arian. Constantine had no other concern with either, but to support the decrees of the council by his authority. To sum up in a few words the whole catalogue of crimes imputed to this Emperor, M. de Voltaire expresses himself as follows. "Would you know the character of Constantine? Inquire of Julian and of Zozimus. They will tell you that at first he acted like a good prince, afterwards like a public robber; that during the latter part of his reign he was prodigal, effeminate, and debauched. At all times they describe him to have been of a cruel and sanguinary disposition. Search for his character in Eusebius, in Gregory of Nazianzen, or in Lactantius. They will tell you that he was a man without fault or blemish. Between these two extremes how are we to decide? By facts. He obliged his father-in-law to hang himself. He caused his brother-in-law to be strangled; his nephew

“nephew about twelve or thirteen years of
 “age to be murdered: his own son to be be-
 “headed, and his wife to be suffocated in a
 “bath.” Such is the horrible portrait which
 M. de Voltaire draws of Constantine. Let
 us examine if the picture be not overcharged,
 and the dark side of the profile presented to
 us. “He obliged his father-in-law to hang
 “himself.” His father-in-law was Maximian
 Hercules, whose daughter Fausta Constantine
 had married for his second wife. The cha-
 racter which the Pagan historians give of
 Maximian is of the most detestable nature.
 They inform us that having abdicated the
 empire with Dioclesian, he solicited him to
 resume it by force. He endeavoured in con-
 sequence to make the army revolt against his
 son Maxentius, whom he himself had created
Augustus, and strove to tear the crown from
 his head in a public assembly. Not being
 able to succeed, and fearing for his life, he
 took refuge with Constantine, who was then
 in Gaul, feigning to have been banished by
 his son, as Eutropius informs us. (lib. 10.)
 Here he attempted several times the life of
 Constantine, and even endeavoured to make
 his own daughter Fausta the accomplice of
 his horrid design. For which, though several
 former

former attempts of the like nature had been forgiven, says Eutropius (as above) he was deservedly put to death. The just punishment of this inhuman and un-natural wretch is the first crime, with which M. de Voltaire charges Constantine. “He caused his brother-in-law to be beheaded, and his nephew to be murdered.” The former was Licinius, the latter Licinian. Aurelius Victor, p. 633, gives a worse and more detestable character, if possible, of Licinius, than Eutropius had done in regard of Maximian and Maxentius. Nevertheless they seem to blame Constantine’s ambition as a motive which tempted him to put them out of the way; yet neither the safety of Constantine’s life, or the peace of the empire were compatible with their existence, we evidently learn from their own concessions. “Constantine,” says M. de Voltaire, “ordered his own son to be beheaded, and his own wife to be suffocated in a bath.” This son, Crispus by name, was by his former wife Minervina. Fausta, the daughter of Maximian Galerius, as has been said, his mother-in-law, was either supposed to be in love with Crispus, or sought to remove him out of the way in favor of her own children. Be that as it may, she accused him of attempting
her

her virtue: Constantine too hasty of belief, ordered him to immediate execution. Being afterwards informed of his wife's vile artifice, he commanded that she should be suffocated in a bath. These are certainly very great blemishes in the character of Constantine, yet we cannot but lament the domestic misfortunes in his family which gave rise to them. Neither ancient or modern historians describe him as a *perfect man, without fault or blemish*, as M. de Voltaire is pleased to insinuate. He certainly had more virtues and fewer faults than most of his predecessors, and upon the whole merited the title of *great*, which history has uniformly conferred upon him. To be convinced of it, we need only attend to the character which the pagans themselves have given of him. Eutropius, after enumerating his virtues, and yet not suppressing his faults, says that *he deserved to be placed among the gods*. (lib. 10. p. 661.) Aurelius Victor informs us that the many beneficial acts which he caused to be done in favor of the people made him be looked upon *as a God*, and such was the love and reverence they had for him, they greatly lamented that his body should be transported to Constantinople. (p. 624.) As to the apparition of the cross, it is a fact which
must

depend upon the strength of the evidence. To judge therefore with some degree of probability we need only adduce the one, and oppose to it what M. de Voltaire asserts upon the subject. It is not sufficient to say that it is incredible, because it is out of the common course of nature. That God can do all things, none but atheists will deny. That he wrought miracles to establish the christian religion is a fact, otherwise there would not be a single christian in the world. The gospel declares that they were the miracles of Jesus Christ which drew disciples after him. He gave the same power to his apostles and their successors who shall believe through their preaching, and this without any limitation either of time or persons. (Mark xvi. 17, 18.) Shall we presume to say, that the hand of God was shortened at that very period which he seems to have chosen for the completion of his designs? This reflection premised, we will attend to the arguments of which Monsieur de Voltaire makes use of to invalidate the relation given of it. He says in his general History, chap. 5. that “learned antiquaries have
 “sufficiently refuted these errors, which are
 “so repugnant to philosophy and sound criticism.—All these imitations of the pallas-
 “dium

"dium of Troy tend only to give a fabulous
 "appearance to truth." To this period the
 authority of three or four contemporary wit-
 nesses may be opposed ; the testimony like-
 wise of Constantine himself, who ratified it
 upon oath. It is said, that there are medals
 of Constantius, the son of Constantine, still
 extant, on which is represented a cross and
 the words *In this sign you shall conquer*. "Some"
 says he, "suppose that this sign in the heavens
 "appeared to him at Besançon, others at Co-
 "logne; many believe it to have been at
 "Treves, others again at Troyes. It is ra-
 "ther surprising that heaven should have ex-
 "plained itself in Greek on this occasion.
 "It would have been more adapted to the
 "weak lights of human nature had it appeared
 "in Italy, and on the day of battle; but then
 "it would have been necessary that the in-
 "scription should have been in Latin. Loi-
 "sel, a learned antiquarian, has refuted this
 "ancient tale, but he has been treated as a
 "miscreant for his pains." But where did
 Mr. Voltaire learn that the inscription was
 in Greek? On the medals of Constantius it
 is in Latin, although the seat of the empire
 was then at Constantinople. Eusebius being
 himself a Greek, it was natural, when he re-

lated the event, that he should write it in his own language. It would have been surprising had he done otherwise. The variety of opinions concerning the spot where this phenomenon appeared, in no manner detracts from the certainty of it. Eusebius says that it was seen in Gaul. Subsequent writers have made various conjectures about the particular spot. "It would have been more natural if it had appeared in Italy, &c." Why so? Could not Almighty God give to Constantine in any part of the globe assurances of his protection, previous to the very moment. "A learned antiquarian has refuted this ancient tale, for which he has been treated as a miscreant." If Loisel was ignorant of the proofs which are adduced in support of it, he certainly does not deserve to be ranked amongst the learned. If he was not, and suppressed them, the epithet was not misapplied. For further information the reader may consult Baluze who, in his notes on Lactantius, has thoroughly canvassed the subject, and given such proofs in favor of his opinion as appear incontrovertible. Many of our learned countrymen also have done as much. Surely these authorities, though they may not carry conviction to every mind, must have a greater degree

degree of probability, than the vague, unsupported assertions of the French poet, whose uniform designs seems to have been to impose on the credulity of his readers.

ARTICLE II.

The inhumanity of the Ancients towards their Slaves.

Almost all the ancient governments abandoned, without reserve, the slaves of both sexes to the lust and brutality of their masters. It is impossible to describe to what excesses this permission gave birth, even amongst nations that are proposed to us as models of wise governments. Yet slaves are men. The misfortune of their birth does not authorise us to treat them with inhumanity, cruelty and injustice. The Pagans however were utter strangers to this maxim. It is incredible to what excess of barbarity they abused the power which the laws gave over them. A master had the power of life and death over his slaves, and too often they exercised it, as for example a Vadius Pollio who ordered one of his slaves to be thrown into a fish-pond to feed his fish. And for what reason? Because he

had broken a wine glass*. Nay, he usually fed his fish with his slaves. "Murenas sanguine humano saginabatur." Examples of this kind were very frequent, the life of a slave being deemed of no importance, unless by the hand of avarice. They looked upon them as beasts of burden; *pecudum numero*, that is the expression of the law. For the most trivial faults they were treated with the greatest cruelty. At Sparta, let slaves be used ever so barbarously they could not reclaim the protection of the laws. They were obliged every year to receive a certain number of stripes, although they had not deserved punishment, merely that they might not forget the duty of obedience. If any of them seemed to be above his condition by the elegance of his figure, he was condemned to die, and his master fined for retaining such as might by their outward appearance offend the eyes of the citizens. The Spartans, by their laws were authorized to fall upon the *Helotes*, their slaves, whilst they were employed in the works of husbandry; and without mercy they would frequently destroy the ablest men amongst

* Seneca de ira, lib. iii. p. 64.

† Ibid. de clementia, lib. i. p. 201.

them,

them, for no other reason, than for exercise, and to prevent them from becoming too populous. At Rome they were often loaded with chains, and otherwise mal-treated, as it happened to Epictetus the * philosopher, who was the slave of Epaphroditus, an officer belonging to the Emperor Nero. The Roman laws ordained that if a slave should kill his master, all the other slaves, however numerous, should be equally put to death. Tacitus relates that Pedanius Secundus, the Governor of Rome in the reign of the Emperor Nero, being slain by one of his slaves, all the rest, though four hundred in number, were put to death. It was long debated if the rigour of the law should not be mitigated in this case, but finally decreed that the ancient statute should be enforced. They were executed accordingly†.

It would be endless to give a minute detail of the inhumanity of the Pagans respecting their slaves. A benevolent system, like

* The Mosaic law, more wise, did not give to masters that tyrannical power. It ordained that if the master in striking a slave, put out an eye or broke a tooth, he should emancipate him. (Exodus, ch. 21—26—27.) And if he killed him, he was liable to be capitally punished for it.

† Annal. lib. xix. p. 184, 185.

christianity,

christianity, was much wanting to remedy this flagrant evil, whereby those unhappy beings might be re-intituted in the natural rights of mankind. It had scarcely begun to dawn upon the world, when Constantine declared all those guilty of murder who should by ill usage cause the death of their slaves. Theodosius, surnamed the great, mitigated still more the deplorable state of slavery. Finally christianity, gaining ground, entirely suppressed the inhuman custom of procuring and retaining slaves*. —A second proof of the advantages and blessings which have accrued to the world by the establishment of christianity.

ARTICLE III.

The barbarous and un-natural combats of their Gladiators.

Here we exhibit another scene of inhumanity, which equally gives us an insight

* The revival of slavery within these two last centuries, and the horrid shape in which it appears in America, must be attributed to that want of faith, and to that degeneracy of morals which we are taught by the very Founder of Christianity to expect in latter times. Even mitigated as the state of slavery is, it shocks the ideas of many well meaning people, as the efforts, which are at present made in Parliament to get it abolished, testify.

into the barbarous customs and manners of the ancients. The first rise of the Gladiators is referred to the ancient custom of killing persons at the funerals of great men. The heathens supposed that the ghosts of the deceased were appeased by the effusion of human blood. Achilles sacrificed Hector to Patrocles; Æneas slew Turnus to appease the manes of Pallas. At first the Pagans used to buy captives, or rebel slaves, and offer them at the obsequies of their friends. Afterwards they contrived to veil over this impious barbarity with the specious show of pleasure, and voluntary combat. Training therefore such wretches, as they had procured, in the management of the offensive weapons then in use, upon a certain day appointed for the sacrifices to the departed objects, they obliged them to maintain a mortal encounter at their tombs. The first show of Gladiators exhibited in Rome was that of Marcus and Decimus Brutus upon the death of their father*. Within a little time, when they found the people so much delighted with these bloody entertainments, they were resolved to give them the like diversions as often as possible,

* Valerius Maximus, lib. 2. p. 168.

and

and therefore it soon became a fashion. Not only the heirs of great and wealthy citizens in honor of their deceased relations, but all the principal magistrates entertained the people with these shows. Nay the very priests sometimes exhibited these impious scenes, for we meet with the *ludi pontificales* in Suetonius*, and with the *ludi sacerdotales* in Pliny†. The Emperors amused the people with these shows on frequent occasions, as on their birth days, on those of a triumph after any signal victory; at the consecration of any public edifice, &c. And as the occasions for these solemnities were so prodigiously increased, so in the same manner was the duration of them, and the number of combatants. Julius Cesar, in his Edilship, brought three hundred and twenty pair of Gladiators upon the stage‡. And Trajan, tho' naturally so averse to cruelty exhibited no less than one thousand couple. Nero presented at one show four hundred senators, and six hundred Roman knights, who did not blush to engage in such a vile and brutal contest. Frequently such numbers of Gladiators assembled to cut each other's

* Vol. 2. p. 19. in Augustum.

† Epist. 34. p. 183.

‡ Plutarch in Cesar.

throats that the Senate was obliged to interpose, and by its authority endeavour to prevent the effusion of so much human blood. The Emperors however paid very little deference to the decrees of the Senate. For the very women engaged in these public encounters, particularly under the Emperors Nero and Domitian, a scene equally indecent as cruel. Juvenal has exposed this impious folly with great spirit in his sixth satire.

- “ They turn viragoes too, the wrestler’s toil
- “ They try, and smear their naked limbs with oil.
- “ Against the post their wicker shields they crush,
- “ Flourish the sword, and at the plastron push.
- “ Of every exercise the Man’ish crew
- “ Fulfills the parts, and oft excells us too.
- “ Prepared not only in feigned battles to engage,
- “ But rout the Gladiators on the stage.”

In fine, these barbarous shews were so much in fashion, and so much to the taste of the people, that they were introduced at all their public feasts, as an essential part of the entertainment. In consequence of which, the ground whereon they met frequently resembled a field of battle. Torrents of * blood
suc-

† We cannot sufficiently admire the wisdom of the Jewish Legislator in guarding against an evil of such magnitude; for nothing can be more alarming than when

succeeded torrents of wine. When the appetite was satiated with feasting, the mind was glutted with the sight of these horrid and mutual massacres. The abolition of these inhuman practices, more adapted to the brute creation, than to men endowed with reason and reflexion, was effected also by Constantine the great about the year of the city 1067, nearly six hundred years after their first institution. Yet under the Emperors Constantius, Theodosius and Valentine the same cruel diversions began to revive, till a final stop was put to them by the Emperor Honorius in the 4th century. A third proof of the advantages and blessings for which the world stands indebted to christianity.

the people become familiarised with blood. What a dreadful example we have of it before our eyes in France! One of the first prohibitions in the decalogue is against murder. *Thou shalt not kill.* The Jews were positively forbid to touch blood. One motive for it was undoubtedly to make them respect the lives of their fellow-creatures.

ARTICLE IV.

*The flagrant extortion of Usurers among the
Greeks and Romans.*

He who only exacted 12 per cent for the yearly interest of a sum lent was esteemed a very honest man in the eyes of the Romans. Yet nothing was more common, and even authorised, than cent. per cent. (*centesima*) payable every month. "At first" says Tacitus, "it was ordained by the laws of the twelve tables that no man should take higher interest than twelve in the hundred, when before it was exacted at the pleasure of the rich*." But when it related to the necessary articles of life, the case of the unfortunate debtor was still more deplorable, as it obliged him at the end of the year to return half the quantity more than he had received, which among the Romans was called *Sesquialtra*. For example. The man who borrowed a bushel of corn, was obliged to return one and a half. Usury however was much more oppressive among the Greeks, because they

* Translated by Gordon, Vol. 2. B. 2. p. 358, &c.

had no fixed rate for the interest of money. The will and pleasure of the lender determined it. And thus it was ordained by the *wise* Solon, the Athenian legislator.

The twelve per cent, as Livy relates, began with the Roman republic, and though many laws were made to reduce it, it thus continued to the destruction of the empire. For as Tacitus informs us that among the senators, of this fault not a soul was guiltless * ; so the usurers, who were very numerous, and no ways apprehensive of the laws, were not content with so trifling a profit. Wherefore they contrived matters in such a manner as to double their capitals in two or three years time, and often in less. That we may judge of the evils which these excessive usuries occasioned, we need only appeal to the above-mentioned Tacitus. "Usury," says he, "was
"in truth an inveterate evil in Rome, and
"the eternal cause of civil discord and sedi-
"tions †."

To give a finishing description of the flagrant extortion of the usurers, we may observe that among the Greeks and Romans the

* Vol. 2. B. 2. p. 358, &c.

† Annal. vol. 2. p. 149.

creditors were impowered by the laws to sell their debtors for slaves, and even to put them to death in failure of payment at the stated time. "If the debtor" (says the 6th art. of the laws of the twelve tables) "be insolvent to several creditors, let his body be cut in pieces on the third market day. It may be * cut into more or fewer pieces with impunity. Or, if his creditors consent to it, let him be sold to foreigners beyond the Tiber †." The laws permitted also the use of chains, not exceeding ‡ fifteen pounds weight. It was a curious law indeed which was to prohibit creditors to crush their debtors under the weight of chains!

* Some modern critics have maintained that this law only permitted the creditors to divide amongst them the property, not the limbs of the debtor. For the honor of human nature we wish it was so. But the words of the law are precise, and it was thus understood by the Roman writers themselves.

† Hooke's Rom. Hist. vol. 2. p. 319.

‡ This was one of the laws enacted by the Decemvirs, partly with a view to mitigate the ancient laws against debtors. Hence we may judge how severe they must have been under the sanction of those laws. Creditors treated their debtors with such barbarity that it excited a general insurrection of the plebeians against the great and opulent. (See Livy, Decade 1.)

Creditors

Creditors were also authorized to seize the corpse of a debtor, and prevent its * burial, which, according to the idea of the Pagans, was the greatest infamy, and the most signal misfortune that could befall them.

" Those who neglected on the strand remain,

" Are all a wretched, poor, unburied train."†

Livy, who in several parts of his history makes mention of the disturbances which this grievous evil occasioned in the state, relates several precautions that were taken from time to time to remedy it, by drawing money from the public funds to pay the debts of those who were distressed by the usurers. He nevertheless speaks not of any punishment denounced against them, or of any penalty they were subjected to for this infamous traffic.

Among Christians the civil law condemns usurers to fines and diverse other penalties. The ecclesiastical law deprives them, among other punishments, of christian burial‡. The Pagans carried on the trade of usury as publicly as if it had been the most legal and in-

* The same law exists amongst us ; but we do not affix the same consequences to it after death.

† Wharton's Virgil.

‡ See Burn's Eccles. Law, Art. Usury.

nocent of professions. Among Christians the usurer disguises himself, and hides his head, that he may escape the merited censure of mankind, and the rigour of the laws.

This is a fourth proof of the blessings and advantages which society has derived from the establishment of Christianity.

ARTICLE V.

The continual subversion of their states, and assassination of their princes.

If we dive into the annals of the world, and attentively consider the various shocks and revolutions which the different states of the universe have sustained, we shall plainly perceive that it is since the establishment of Christianity only that such dreadful, and calamitous scenes are become less frequent. Let us, for example, take a short view of the Roman empire. From the day that Rome was founded by Romulus, to the period wherein it became Christian under the emperor Constantine, that is nearly for the space of one thousand years, what a series of troubles, what seditions, what massacres and murders occur! This famous city was at first governed

verned by seven kings. Of these seven kings, three were massacred, and the fourth dethroned, and proscribed. Upon the ruins of monarchy, a republic was established. This form of government scarcely existed twenty years, when there arose a misunderstanding between the nobility and the people. The latter retired in a tumultuous manner from the capital, and ravaged the country. In consequence of which the former were obliged to submit to their terms, and to agree to the creation of two magistrates, by name of Tribunes; who, under the specious pretext of protecting the people from the oppressions of the great, perpetually fomented and kept up a constant division between both parties.

This spirit of faction operated so violently on the minds of the people, that during three whole centuries and upwards the state was convulsed by constant broils and seditions. The evil still increased, insomuch that at the time of the Gracchi, Rome resembled a field of battle, where the citizens cut and hacked each other to pieces without any regard to the ties of blood or friendship with as much violence and animosity as against the most inveterate enemy.

About

About fifty years after this period, the same fury and rancour was rekindled by the civil wars of Marius and Sylla, in consequence of which Rome, Italy, Greece, and Spain overflowed with Roman blood. Neither birth, dignity, or alliance could escape the reciprocal proscriptions of the contending parties. Scarcely was there a family to be seen which had not its particular mourning; and those very insignia of grief and woe added fresh fuel to minds heated with rancour and revenge. To this sad period succeeded a long series of civil wars. Fifteen months after the death of Sylla, Cataline conspired against his country, and died with his sword in his hand. Cesar, a few years afterwards, adopted the same project; who, for the misfortune of his country, being a man of greater abilities, overthrew the republic; made himself master of the whole empire; and, after five years spent in civil discord, was assassinated in the very senate-house by his bosom-friend Brutus. His death gave rise to farther feuds and broils which revived all the horrors of civil war occasioned by Marius and Sylla. This was the famous triumvirate of Octavius, Anthony and Lepidus. The former having got the ascendant, Rome,

by his wife administration, once more recovered from its former calamities. This period of tranquillity nevertheless was of short duration, being soon after overwhelmed by the vices of the inhuman and profligate Tiberius, Caligula and Nero. At the death of this last monster, the civil wars recommenced under Otho, Galba, and Vitellius. Vespasian happily restored tranquillity, and reigned alone. From this period to that of Constantine, that is for the space of two hundred and sixty years, we may remark the civil wars of Cassius under Marcus Aurelius, of Didius Julianus, of Niger, of Albinus under Septimus Severus, and of Maximin who dethroned Alexander. The Gordians and the Philips died by the hands of their own soldiers. The spirit of sedition continued under the Emperors Florianus, Probus, Carus and Numerian. It was blood alone that could decide the fate of the world. We may look however upon those civil wars as the last, which were waged between Constantine and Maxentius, and afterwards between the former and Licinius, at which period christianity began to get the ascendant. Thus it appears that of the seven kings of Rome, three were massacred, and one dethroned. Of the twelve Cæsars, there were
only

only three or four who died of natural deaths. Of forty Emperors, from the time of Domitian to Constantine the Great, more than one half of them perished by the hands of their rebellious subjects. If from the Romans we pass to the Greeks, we find the same spirit of sedition and massacre. The whole family and descendants of Alexander the Great came to an untimely end. Most of the kings of Syria died either by poison, or the sword. Of eighteen princes, from Seleucus the first to Demetrius the last of the name, ten at least perished by rebellious hands. The Lagides in Egypt afford as shocking instances in that respect as the successors of Seleucus in Syria.

If from the Greeks we take a survey of the Arabs, the same bloody scenes occur. Omar, Alli, Moavi, Othman, Huffan, Ibrahim were all assassinated within the year. During this melancholy period what deeds of oppression, treachery, and massacre were perpetrated! Motkar alone boasted that he had put fifty thousand Ommiades to death; and Abdallah Mahomet the first Calif of the Abassides, called himself *Saffah*, that is *the Destroyer*, on account of the horrible massacre which, by his order, was committed on

the princes of the Ommiades, and their adherents throughout the whole empire.

In fine, one age of paganism presents infinitely more examples of these enormous crimes than are to be found in all the christian monarchies put together during fifteen centuries. If the passions and vices incident to human nature, which the christian religion condemns, but which she has not always the power to restrain, have caused such melancholy scenes from time to time, what are they in comparison to the perpetual feuds, broils, seditions, and massacres which desolated the æra of paganism? It is therefore an incontestable fact that, were it in this point of view only, the establishment of christianity has been an invaluable blessing to the world. "Thanks to the gospel," says M. Bergier, "we shall never again * see a Paulus Emilius destroy in one single province seventy towns, and put in chains one hundred and fifty thousand citizens. We shall never again hear a furious Cato concluding his ha-

* He little suspected at the time he wrote that his countrymen would turn their backs upon the gospel to which they were indebted for the mildness of their manners. Having discarded it, they are falling fast into the same excesses as the ancient Pagans.

"rangues

"rangues in the Senate with these words of a
 "madman: *delenda est Carthago; Carthage must*
 "*be destroyed.* We shall no more brag of the
 "exploits of a Scipio Africanus, whose rage
 "could not be satisfied with any thing less
 "than the burning of that unhappy city. We
 "shall never again stand in fear of a brutal
 "Mummius sacking, destroying, and burning
 "the most beautiful city in Greece, because
 "its glory eclipsed Rome; or of punishing
 "thousands of innocent people for the mad-
 "ness of two or three seditious persons. If
 "the last * war, in which all Europe was en-
 "gaged, had been carried on by such heroes
 "as these, Germany at this day had been no-
 "thing but a frightful desert†."

* He means the seven years war.

† Deism self-refuted, vol. 2. p. 130.

ARTICLE VI.

The shocking extravagance of Idolatry.

The first and most respectable Deity among the heathens was Júpiter, who, according to their mythology, is represented as guilty of incest and adultery, a parricide, a seducer and debaucher of female virtue. He dethroned his father Saturn. He married his sister Juno; had likewise several other wives, and a prodigious number of children by his gallantries. He transformed himself into a satyr to possess Antiope; into a bull to carry off Europa; into a swan to debauch Leda; into a golden shower to corrupt Danae, and into divers other shapes to satisfy his passions." "Ancient paganism," says Rousseau, "brought forth most abominable gods, who would have been punished here below as villains; and who held forth, as a picture of supreme happiness, nothing but the commission of crimes, and the gratification of the passions*." Jupiter had Bacchus by Semele; Pallas by Thetis; Diana and Apollo by Latona, and was the supposed father of Mercury, and many other such Gods. To the queen of heaven (Juno) they attributed all those evil qualities which characterize bad women. Mars was

* Emile, t. iii. p. 98.

choleric and vindictive, ever delighting in blood and carnage. Venus was the object of impure love, the patroness of prostitution. Apollo, according to their fables, was expelled heaven for murder and sedition; Diana was honored with human sacrifices. The other Deities were of the same complexion; and be it observed, that the Pagans never attributed any virtuous action to the infamous objects of their vows and adorations.

To this horrid picture we may add also a multitude of ridiculous Deities, such as the Gods of the Egyptians, the Phenicians, the Babylonians, &c. Though the manner in which the Pagan Deities were worshipped perfectly coincided with their characters, yet it will be better to avoid entering into a detail of their mysterious rites, and forbear to unveil the abominable ceremonies of their feasts in honor of the *Bona Dea*, of Bacchus, of Ceres, &c. * Clemens of Alexandria, an ancient and learned Father of the Church, once a Pagan himself, consequently well informed on the subject, treats it at large with a view of exposing and confounding the folly and abomination of their worship. To relate

* He renounced the errors of paganism in the year 190. The works which he has left behind him, are greatly commended for their erudition.

what he says on the subject would only offend against decency, and give scandal without necessity.

Such then were the Gods mankind adored, and such the modes of religious worship which engaged the attention of the whole world (the Jews excepted, who however often fell into the same extravagances) before the æra of christianity. These disorders, which it is impossible to call in question, did not cease till the preaching of the gospel. Had it not been for the rational doctrines it inculcates, they would still exist. “It is the gospel,” says M. Bergier, “that threw down all the Gods one after another; that dissipated the dread that people every where had of those imaginary beings; that suppressed the execrable custom of appeasing them by human sacrifices, by the combats of Gladiators, and by the blood of their own children. It is the gospel that hath every where brought the oracles, forcery, and every kind of divination into disrepute, to the great mortification and astonishment of sophy, which took them under its protection.” “It hath” as J. J. Rousseau himself confesses, “suppressed, or softened slavery, harmonized nations, lightened the bonds of society,

“ society, and rendered governments less sanguinary. It hath retrenched the licentious devotions, more dear to the idolaters than the gods themselves; festivals only fit to destroy with impunity the obligations of marriage, and to degrade humanity*.”

If paganism however supported itself for some time after the preaching of the gospel, it was by means only of the liberties which it allowed to its professors. Those, who can reflect, must be surprised that the world could so long be led astray by the absurdity, folly, and extravagance of such a system. But how much more must we be astonished that a religion of such benevolence, a religion which enforces every social duty, as christianity evidently does, should be so virulently attacked by so many modern writers. Some throw their envenomed shafts against it in the most open and indecent manner. Others, more subtle, make their attack in an underhand and disguised method. Let it however be observed that none have even the charms of novelty, for not one objection, which they start against the christian religion, is of their own growth. They are the hackneyed argu-

* Deism self-refuted, vol. i. p. 62, 63.

ments only of prior sceptics, which have been refuted over and over again. Our astonishment however will cease when we reflect that the christian religion is the declared enemy of every unruly passion; and that it is the corruption of the heart, and the pride of the mind which cause men to rebel against it, and make them overlook, and be insensible to those signal advantages which have undoubtedly accrued to society by the establishment of it.

*The Superexcellence of the Christian Code, with
a short sketch of its divine Founder.*

Let us suppose a system of philosophy, which, by its admirable maxims, would both enlighten the understanding, instil into the human mind the purest notions of equity and justice, and conduct men into the paths of virtue and wisdom; would not such a system be the object of their veneration and esteem, particularly if it tended to eradicate those detestable vices, those barbarous and unnatural customs, such as have been described above, and cause them to be superseded by humanity, temperance, and the practice of every moral virtue; if it rekindled in the
hearts

hearts of men those innate principles which the law of nature has engraved therein, would not such a system, once more let it be repeated, be deservedly the object of our veneration and respect? The christian religion teaches us this amiable philosophy; and it is by the establishment of it alone that these blessings and advantages have accrued to society.

Were other proofs wanting to establish the fact, we might abide by the opinion of J. J. Rousseau. "The gospel, says he, "has brought about the most happy revolution. "It has cast down idolatry with all its extravagances, all the abominations and cruelties that originated in it. It has either suppressed, or softened slavery, and given to the manners of nations a mildness and humanity which letters could never have communicated to them. It has rendered the different forms of government more moderate and less sanguinary, and by that means less tottering and less exposed to revolutions: it has provided for the security of masters, and the happiness of subjects*. Undoubtedly our modern governments are indebted to christianity for their more solid authority

* Emile, t. iii. p. 185.

“and their less frequent revolutions. It hath
 “rendered them less sanguinary; this is
 “proved by facts when we compare them with
 “the ancient governments. Religion better
 “understood by keeping off fanaticism hath
 “introduced more mildness into christian
 “manners. This alteration is not the effect
 “of letters; for wherever they flourished,
 “humanity was not a jot the more respected;
 “cruelties committed in Athens, in Egypt,
 “and by the Roman emperors, and the Chi-
 “nese attest this. What works of mercy are
 “the effects of the gospel! What restitutions,
 “what reparations for injuries done doth not
 “confession effect among the catholics! What
 “reconciliations, what alms doth not an ap-
 “proaching time of communion produce a-
 “mongst us! How much did the jubilee a-
 “mongst the Hebrews lessen the greediness
 “of the usurpers of other’s lands!” (*ibid.*)

The president Montesquieu, who valued
 himself much upon his profound reasoning,
 and who was equally free in declaring his opi-
 nions as J. J. Rousseau, had also the most ex-
 alted idea of the advantages which society de-
 rives from the establishment of the christian
 religion. “While the Mahometan princes,”
 says he, “are continually ordering others to be

"be put to death, and are put to death them-
 "selves, religion among christians makes prin-
 "ces less apprehensive, and consequently less
 "cruel. The prince relies on his subjects,
 "and the subjects on the prince. Wonder-
 "ful! the christian religion, which seems to
 "have no other object than the happiness of a
 "life to come, constitutes moreover our hap-
 "piness in this. It is the christian religion,
 "which, notwithstanding the extent of the
 "empire and the vice of the climate, hath
 "hindered despotism from getting foot in
 "Ethiopia, and hath introduced into the
 "midst of Africa the manners of Europe, and
 "its laws. Let us on one hand place before
 "our eyes the continual massacres of the
 "kings and leaders of both Greeks and Ro-
 "mans; and on the other the destruction of
 "towns by leaders of the same stamp, Thimur
 "and Gengiskan who laid waste Asia, and we
 "shall see that it is to christianity we are in-
 "debted both for a fixed political law in go-
 "vernment, and a fixed law of nations in
 "war, which human nature cannot sufficiently
 "acknowledge*."

* Spirit of the Laws, l. 24: c, 3.

Such are the blessings which society has received from the precepts of the gospel. What idea then can we form of the code which inculcates them, and of the legislator from whence they originated? The beautiful period of Rousseau on the subject will decide the question. "I acknowledge," says he, "that the majesty of the scripture strikes me "with admiration; the sanctity of the gospel "speaks to my heart. Peruse the works of "all the philosophers with all their pomp of "diction: how pitiful are they in comparison "of the gospel. Is it possible, that he whose "history it gives us, should be no more than a "mere man? Is the tone he makes use of that "of an enthusiast, or an ambitious sectary? "What sweetness! What purity in his man- "ners! What an affecting gracefulness in his "manner of instructing! What elevation in "his maxims! What profound wisdom in his "discourses! What presence of mind, what "subtilty, what exactness in his replies! What "a command over his passions! Where is the "man, where is the sage, who can act, suffer "and die, without weakness, and without "ostentation! When Plato describes his ima- "ginary *good man*, covered with all that is op- "probrious in guilt, yet meriting all the re-
wards

“wards of virtue, he gives us a picture of Je-
 “sus Christ; the resemblance of which was so
 “striking, that all the Fathers perceived it,
 “and it is really impossible to be deceived
 “therein. What prepossession, what blind-
 “ness must it be to dare to compare the son
 “of Sophroniscus to the son of Mary! What
 “a distance between the one and the other!
 “Socrates dying without pain, without igno-
 “miny, easily supports his character to the
 “last; and if this, so easy a death, had not
 “done honor to his life, it might have been
 “doubted, whether Socrates with all his
 “sense, had been any thing more than a so-
 “phist. He invented, it is said, the system of
 “morals. Others before him, had put them in
 “practice. He only said what they had done,
 “and reduced their examples to lessons. Ar-
 “istides had been just, before Socrates had
 “defined what justice was; Leonidas had
 “died for his country, before Socrates had
 “made the love of our country a duty. Sparta
 “had been sober, before Socrates had re-
 “commended sobriety; Greece had abound-
 “ed in virtuous men, before he had defined
 “virtue. But where had Jesus learned a-
 “mong his countrymen that sublime and pure
 “morality, of which he alone has given us
 “such

“ lessons, and such examples? The most sub-
 “ lime wisdom made itself feared in the very
 “ bosom of the most furious fanaticism, and the
 “ simplicity of the most heroic virtues did ho-
 “ nor to the vilest people on earth. The
 “ death of Socrates philosophizing at his ease
 “ among his friends, is the sweetest death one
 “ could desire; that of Jesus expiring in tor-
 “ ments, abused, scoffed at, cursed by a whole
 “ people, is the most horrible that can be
 “ dreaded. Socrates receiving the empoi-
 “ soned cup, blesses the man who presents it,
 “ and weeps. Jesus, in the midst of the exe-
 “ cution of a frightful punishment, prays for
 “ his merciless executioners. Yes, if the life
 “ and death of Socrates are those of a sage,
 “ the life and death of Jesus are those of a
 “ God. Shall we say, the history of the gos-
 “ pel is a mere fiction? It hath nothing like a
 “ fiction in it; and the facts regarding Socra-
 “ tes, which no one calls in question, are not
 “ so well attested as those regarding Jesus
 “ Christ. To suppose the gospel a fiction is
 “ only shifting the difficulty a little, without
 “ removing it. It is more inconceivable that
 “ several persons should by agreement forge
 “ such a book, than it is, that one person alone
 “ should furnish the subject of it. Never
 could

“ could any Jewish authors have found out
 “ such a manner of speaking, or such mora-
 “ lity; and the gospel hath such characters
 “ of truth, so grand, so striking, so perfectly
 “ inimitable, that the inventor of such a
 “ history would be a greater object of won-
 “ der than the hero himself*.”

M. de Voltaire however differs in opinion from Rousseau. Thus we see that modern philosophers are not more uniform in their sentiments than those of antiquity. He maintains that the morality which the christian religion inculcates is not only useless, but pernicious. It is in a word the source from whence all the evils which mankind experience originates. He offers indeed no proofs as usual. According to him, morality was known and put in practice before the days of Jesus Christ. “ It was,” says he, “ every
 “ where inculcated by the philosophers. A-
 “ mong the pagans there were more real vir-
 “ tues than among the christians†.”

No body will dispute that amongst the pagans there were many persons respectable for their virtues. History affords many great

* Emile, t. iii. p. 165.

† Christ. describ. p. 139.

examples of justice, patriotism, continence, &c. &c. But J. J. Rousseau will not allow that the beautiful system of morality that is to be found in our books, should be imputed to the progress of philosophy. "Morality," says he, "is taken from the gospel, and was christian before it was philosophical. The christians taught it I confess without practising it. But what do the philosophers more, except that of bestowing on themselves a world of encomiums on this account, which, as they are repeated by no body else, in my opinion prove but little. The precepts of Plato are often very sublime, but how frequently is he mistaken? and to what strange lengths do his errors carry him? As to Cicero, it can hardly be believed that rhetorician could have ever given the world his offices, had he not borrowed from Plato. The gospel alone is, with regard to morality, *always certain, always true, always singular, and always consistent with itself* *."

The force of truth having extorted such an ample confession in favor of christian morality, and of its divine Founder, let us proceed to make a few reflections on the establishment of that system.

* 3d Letter from the Mountains, N. p. 65.

The establishment of christianity is one of those prodigies which the event alone can verify. The greatness of the enterprize, and the feeble means to effect it, seemed to render its success impossible. The surprising progress however which it made, in spite of almost insurmountable obstacles, must strike every man of the least reflection with wonder and astonishment. It evidently marks the interposition of a superior power. On no other grounds can it possibly be accounted for. Let us seriously consider what was the object of the undertaking. It was, in the first place, to convince men, who thought themselves superiorly wise, that they were blinded by ignorance, and misled by folly: it was to persuade them to relinquish the religions of their ancestors, which were commodious and pleasing; religions which in no respect cramped their passions, to embrace one that combated, and denounced war against them all: to propose to their assent the most incomprehensible doctrines, as the most incontestable truths, and such as were in their consequences of the most alarming nature: to cause these doctrines to be received by a people, who were averse to all manner of constraint or trouble in thinking: to prevail upon them to abolish

their ancient forms of worship, which ages had rendered respectable in their eyes: to make them demolish their temples, which had been constructed by public authority, and by the zeal and munificence of their princes: to induce them to pull down their idols, which they had been accustomed to look up to with reverence and respect: finally, to change their ideas so compleatly, as to make them look upon all their ancient practices as superstitious, impious and extravagant! Such was the undertaking, such the revolution to be effected upon the minds of men! And who are they, who were deputed to bring about this astonishing revolution? Twelve poor, weak, ignorant, illiterate men; men who were destitute of all worldly help, succour or support. These were the men who were to open the eyes of the superstitious, reclaim the debauchee, instil humility into the minds of proud philosophers, gain attention and respect from the princes of the earth, cause the ancient religions to be proscribed, and that of a Man, lately condemned to an ignominious death in Jerusalem, to be received in their stead!

What measures did they take to effect this surprising and arduous revolution? In
the

the first place, they astonish the world with their manifold virtues; virtues the most sublime, the most heroic, the most pure; such as were scarcely known, much less practised; virtues so sublime, so excellent, that they seemed almost beyond the reach of man. They moreover put in practice all these admirable lessons which they had been taught by their great Master. What recompence, what return do they seek for their pains and labour? The consolation and happiness only of imparting those blessings to their fellow creatures. They covet nothing this world affords. To enlighten and meliorate the hearts of men, to devote themselves entirely to the good and welfare of their neighbour, even at the risk of their lives, is the summit of all their ambition.

In the mean time how were these apostolical men received, and what was the success which attended their labours? It was such as might be expected from men who were sent by God, and filled with his holy Spirit; by men who were superior to all fear, and to every worldly consideration whatever.

They disperse; and each of them, in the country which is assigned to him, announces the religion of Jesus Christ. In a short time
his

his holy name resounds throughout the whole Roman empire, and even * beyond it, for it may be proved by authentic documents that there was scarcely any part of the then known globe where it was not announced, even in the days of the apostles. Pliny, the younger, governor of Bithynia under the emperor Trajan, gives the most ample testimony of its progress in the Roman empire. He informs the emperor by letter that "the christians not only fill the cities, but the villages and fields. The christian religion has been em-

* Justin Martyr, is severely censured by the author of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, for saying that the christian religion was spread throughout the world. But how could a writer of such taste and learning take a figurative expression literally? Every one knows that this phrase signifies no more than that it was *widely* diffused. It is generally understood so without any absurdity. M. de Voltaire has been already told so, when he ridiculed Herodotus for relating that Sesostrus went out of Egypt to conquer the *whole* world. "Now the design," says he, "of conquering the *whole* world is one of Pierocole's projects in Rabelas;" or, as we may say, one of Mother Goose's tales. Indeed he himself has taken it in that limited sense, when it suited his purpose. In speaking of the disciples of Mahomet, he says that "after their first victory, they sought to conquer the world. But to conquer the world, is to conquer the neighbouring provinces." (Universal History.)

"braced

“ braced by a very great number of people of
 “ all ages and degrees, and that the temples
 “ have been almost deserted *.” Such was the
 account transmitted by a pagan magistrate,
 who lived at the beginning of the second cen-
 tury of the christian æra.

No author however more minutely de-
 scribes the great increase of the christians
 than † Tertullian, in the noble apology he
 presented to the senate in their behalf. “ We
 “ are but of yesterday,” says he, “ yet we fill
 “ your towns, your islands, your colonies,
 “ &c. If this multitude of subjects was to
 “ desert you, your empire would be depopu-
 “ lated. There would remain with you more
 “ enemies than citizens. The reason you
 “ have fewer enemies, is because all the citi-
 “ zens are become christians ‡.”

For the purity and innocence of lives of
 the primitive christians, we may appeal also to
 the testimony of the abovesaid Pliny. “ The

* Lord Orrery’s translat. of Pliny, vol. 2. p. 428.

† Quintus Septimus Tertullianus was one of the great-
 est men that Africa ever produced. He was the son of a
 centurion, who was proconsul of Africa. Tertullian
 lived to a very great age, and died about the year 216 in
 the reign of the emperor Antoninus Caracalla.

‡ Cap. 37. p. 30.

“ apostate

" apostate christians," he informs us, " as-
 " firmed that the sum total of their fault, or of
 " their error, consisted in assembling upon
 " certain stated days before it was light, to
 " sing alternately among themselves hymns to
 " Christ, as to a God; binding themselves by
 " oath, not to be guilty of any wickedness;
 " not to steal, nor to rob; not to commit
 " adultery, nor break their faith when plighted,
 " nor to deny the deposites in their hands,
 " whenever called upon to restore them.
 " These ceremonies performed, they usually
 " departed, and came together again to take
 " a repast, the meat of which was innocent,
 " and eat promiscuously *."

" Wherefore," † said Arnobius, " do you
 " burn our books, and demolish our places of
 " worship? Therein we adore God: therein
 " we offer up our prayers for the peace and

* Vol. ii. p. 427.

† Arnobius had been a Pagan philosopher, and pro-
 fessor of rhetoric, at Sicca Venerea, in Africa, about the
 year 207. He was the master of Lactantius; and, after
 his conversion, he wrote several tracts against the Gen-
 tiles. " In one of these," he says, " I lately revered,
 " oh blindness! statues taken from the furnace; gods
 " hammered upon the anvil. As if they had secret virtue,
 " I flattered them; I spoke to them; I made requests to
 " insensible stocks". (*Adversus Gentes*, Lib. i.)

" welfare

“welfare of princes and magistrates; for the
 “success of their armies; for our friends, and
 “for our enemies.—We assist with all our
 “power, those who are in penury and distress,
 “looking upon every man as our neigh-
 “bour *.”

“Ye who judge criminals,” said Tertul-
 lian to the senators of Rome, “I appeal to
 “your registers if a christian is to be found of
 “that number. Those who fill your prisons,
 “who work in the mines, who are exposed to
 “wild beasts, are of your own persuasion. There
 “*is not a christian* to be found therein, unless
 “it be for his religion. If for any other
 “cause, he is not a christian †.”

‡ Athanagoras spoke to the same effect be-

* Ib. Lib. 4, p. 53.

† Apol. cap. 44. p. 34.—The author of the Decline
 and Fall of the Roman Empire, discanting upon this
 passage, says that “Tertullian with an honest pride
 “could boast, that *very few* christians had suffered by
 “the hands of the executioner, except on account of
 “religion.” (p. 481.) But Tertullian’s words are, *not*
one christian. Nemo illic christinus, nisi pro religione sua.
 The author’s translation therefore is not accurate, and con-
 sequently the ignorant reader is imposed upon.

‡ He was a pagan philosopher of Athens in the second
 century, and became a convert to christianity. He dis-
 tinguished himself eminently by his zeal and learning.
 He wrote an apology for the christians, which he pre-
 sented to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius.

fore Tertullian. “No christian is wicked unless he belies his profession *.”

† Minutius Felix expresses himself after the same manner. “The prisons,” says he, “overflow with your criminals. No christian is to be found therein, if not for his religion. —If for any other cause, he is an apostate ‡.”

The reproaches of the Pagan Cæcilius (See Minutius Felix, as above) against the christians make undoubtedly their panegyric. “Always fearful,” says he, “you deprive yourselves of innocent amusements. You never frequent the theatres; you assist not at the public feasts; you abhor the offered meats, and the chosen libations of our altars.” The author of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, like Cæcilius, has unwittingly it may be supposed, made their panegyric, when at the same time he meant to censure the conduct of the christians. For we read in page 465, that “the dangerous temptations, which on every side lurked in ambush to surprise the unguarded believer, assailed him

* Legat pro christianis ad Marcum Aurelium.

† He was a distinguished Roman orator.

‡ P. 41, 42, De idolorum vanitate, &c.

“ with redoubled violence on those solemn
 “ (festival) days. So artfully were they framed
 “ and disposed throughout the year, that su-
 “ perstition always wore the appearance of
 “ pleasure, and often of virtue. Hence their
 panegyric for absenting themselves from
 these festivals. In a subsequent passage how-
 ever the author censures them for it. “ The
 “ christians,” says he, “ were not less averse
 “ to business, than to the pleasures of the
 “ world.—Their simplicity was offended by
 “ the use of oaths, by the pomp of magistracy,
 “ and by the active contentions of public
 “ life.—This indolent and even criminal dis-
 “ regard to the public welfare, exposed them
 “ to the contempt and reproaches of the
 “ Pagans.” Nevertheless Julian, the apo-
 state, bears testimony to their virtue, and ac-
 knowledges the generous dispositions of the
 christians, in relieving the distressed and ne-
 cessitous of every description. (Epist. ad
 Arfacem.)

It may not be improper here to observe,
 that, as Constantine has been the object of
 M. de Voltaire's severest satire, so has Julian,
 been set forth by him, in the highest strain of
 panegyric. The reason is obvious. Con-
 stantine protected the christians, and shewed a

predilection for their religion. Julian apostatized from that religion in which he was educated, and persecuted its adherents. A short sketch of his conduct in life, as related by the Pagan historians themselves, will enable us to judge of his deserts. Julian was the son of Julius Constantius, the brother of Constantine the great. He was born at Constantinople, A. D. 331. Eusebius, bishop of Nicomedia, who was his near relation, was charged with the care of his education. He was accordingly, as has been said, educated in the principles of the christian religion. Unfortunately however he attached himself at an early period of life, to the Pagan philosopher Maximus, who flattered his ambition with the hopes of succeeding to the empire. In consequence of this, he applied himself to the study of the occult sciences, and gave into all the superstitious practices of the Pagans. It was this detestable curiosity of diving into futurity, which was the more immediate cause of his apostacy. On all hands he is allowed to have been possessed of many of those great qualities which constitute the hero; and, under proper restrictions, that form the philosopher. But they were counter-balanced by some of the most detestable vices,

vices, which made Abbè Fleury justly remark, that “there was such a mixture of good and bad qualities in his disposition, that judging by one side of the profile only, it would be easy either to praise or blame him, without deviating from the truth.”

Ammianus Marcellinus, a zealous Pagan, and an officer of distinction in the Roman army, describes Julian as a hero, yet does not dissemble his faults. M. de Voltaire enlarges upon the panegyric of Marcellinus, but suppresses the latter. “This Emperor,” says he, “who is described as a detestable personage by our historians, was perhaps the first, or the second great man which this world produced. Always sober, temperate, chaste; sleeping little, dividing his time between the affairs of state and study; friendly, and generous; the avowed enemy of all pomp and parade, &c. Had he been a private person, he would have attracted universal admiration.” This is the bright side of the profile.

Let us now take a view of the other side.

Julian was born and educated a christian, as has been observed, which he abjured, and gave into the rankest superstitions, which the Pagans themselves have severely censured.

He

He was constantly attended by magicians and astrologers, and was "more superstitious than religious," as his panegyrist, A. Marcellinus confesses. It is from this said A. Marcellinus that all the features of Julian's character are here deduced. It was said of him, that "if he returned victorious from the Parthian war, there would not be beasts sufficient for sacrifice to satisfy his superstition." This philosophic Emperor would "frequently walk in procession surrounded by women with children at their breasts," (an usual superstitious ceremony in those days) "and attended by a multitude of people, carrying the idols and instruments for sacrifice." (Lib. xxii.) The generous disposition of his character, which M. de Voltaire so much extols, is not easily to be reconciled with that duplicity, with which he conducted himself towards his uncle Constantius; nor with his obstinacy in retaining the title of Augustus, which Constantius would not confer upon him. Constantine the great, as has been observed, shewed much more moderation and deference to Maximian Galerius, who would only permit him to take the title of Cesar, although he had been saluted Emperor by the army. Constantine acquiesced, rather than excite a civil war. But the *moderate*

rate, and generous Julian, as M. de Voltaire calls him, chose rather to wage war with his uncle, than yield to his remonstrances. This same philosophic Emperor, according to * Theodoret, sacrificed a woman in the temple of the moon at Carræ. M. de Voltaire is indignant at this story, so prejudicial to the character of his hero, and says that Theodoret is the only person who mentions it. To this it is answered that Theodoret living in the neighbourhood of Carræ, was the more likely to be informed of the truth of it. He was likewise nearly a contemporary with the fact, and his veracity as yet has never been impeached. A. Marcellinus, it is true, makes no express mention of it, because he suppresses, as he himself declares, (Lib. xx.) certain facts which might tarnish the character of his hero. However he speaks sufficiently clear upon that occasion, to render Theodoret's relation very probable. From Marcellinus we collect that Julian performed a sacrifice at Carræ, in a very secret manner in the presence of Procopius alone, whom he ordered to assume the purple as soon as he should hear

* He was bishop of Cyr in Syria, in the fourth century, and was one of the most learned fathers of the church.

of his death. (Lib. xxiii.) “ Although Emperor,” adds M. de Voltaire, “ we find that “ he refused to take the pompous title of “ *Dominus*, which Constantine affected.” We read however in A. Marcellinus, that “ he “ was greedy of popular applause, even of the “ lowest kind.” (Lib. xxv.) “ A foolish story “ is related,” continues the said M. de Voltaire, “ that when Julian undertook to re- “ build the temple of Jerusalem, globes of fire “ burst forth from the earth, and consumed “ both the works and the workmen.” We know that Jesus Christ and the prophets foretold the destruction of the temple, and that it should never be rebuilt. Julian flattered himself that he could defeat the prophecy, and by that means overthrow the authenticity of the scriptures. He collected therefore a multitude of Jews, and flattered their obstinate and obdurate hearts with the hopes of success, furnishing immense sums of money for the undertaking. The issue of this business is related by A. Marcellinus. “ Alipius,” says he, “ hurried on the works with unremitting diligence. He was moreover “ assisted by the governor of the province. “ But all his exertions, all his pains were of “ no avail, as globes of fire burst forth from “ the

“the foundations, and consumed several of the
 “workmen; this dreadful element driving
 “away to a distance all those who offered to
 “approach. Wherefore the project was
 “abandoned.” (lib. xxiii.) These are the
 words of that pagan author; and the fact is
 so well attested on all hands that no one rela-
 tion of antiquity has been more universally
 credited.

The artifice and duplicity, with which Ju-
 lian conducted himself, to conceal the incli-
 nation he had for idolatry, and his zeal for
 the re-establishment of it, does not pass un-
 noticed by A. Marcellinus. “To succeed
 “more successfully,” he says, “Julian assem-
 “bled those bishops and the people in his pa-
 “lace who he knew were most divided in
 “their religious opinions. He exhorted them
 “to live in peace, but at the same time to be
 “fixed and determined in their sentiments.
 “This he did with the view of increasing their
 “divisions, having observed, as he said, that
 “*wild beasts are not more ferocious to each other,*
 “*than the Christians, when they are divided in*
 “*religious opinions.*” (Lib. xxii.) Julian’s du-
 plicity and malice is here laid open by A.
 Marcellinus. How incorrect then has M. de
 Voltaire translated this passage, when he says

M

that

that Marcellinus relates that it was Julian's observation that *the Christians in his time tore one another to pieces like wild beasts!* The words of Marcellinus are; "Utque dispositorum roboraret effectum, dissidentes Christianos Antistites cum plebe discissâ in palatium intromissos monebat ut civilibus discordiis consopitis, quisque nullo vetente religioni suæ ferviret intrepidus: quod agebat ideo obstinatè, ut dissentiones augente licentia, non timeret unanimitatem postea plebem, nullas infestas hominibus bestiis ut sunt sibi feralibus plerisque christianorum expertus."

M. de Voltaire not only apologizes in a certain degree for the apostacy of Julian, but he even endeavours to justify it. In support of his hypothesis he adduces the crimes of Constantine, which, he says, Julian must have beheld with horror and detestation, and consequently prejudice him against the christian religion. But if he was to judge of things by men, how much more rational in him would it have been to conceive a horror of paganism, which had produced so many emperors who were more like beasts than men? Constantine had undoubtedly his faults. They have been stated. But what were they, when

when compared to the ferocity of Caligula, Domitian, Maximian, Decius; with the infamous debaucheries of Nero, Heliogabalus and Caracalla? The flagrant crimes of the Pagans ought to have made a greater impression on the mind of Julian, than the few defects and blemishes in the character of Constantine; which, as has been observed, arose chiefly from his domestic misfortunes.

Another argument which the French philosopher makes use of to palliate Julian's apostasy he borrows from * Suidas, which he dresses up as usual after his own fashion. It proceeded, says he, from the haughty deportment and the spiritual pride of the bishops. " A bishop of Tripoli sent word to the Empress that he should not visit her unless she received him in a manner suitable to his dignity. He expected that she should meet him at the door of her apartment, and receive his benediction in an humble and respectful posture. Nor was she to be seated, till he had granted her the permission so to do. The Pagan Pontiffs did not behave themselves thus arrogantly to their sovereigns. Such a proud deportment must have

* A Greek historian of the 11th century.

“made a forcible impresson on the mind
 “of Julian, who was present.” So far M.
 de Voltaire. Suidas however relates the
 story nearly after the following manner.
 “Several bishops,” says he, “having assem-
 “bled for the purpose of holding a council,
 “they went by turns to pay their respects to
 “the Empress Eusebia, who received them in
 “a very haughty and disdainful manner:
 “Leontius, an African bishop, a man whose
 “character was not of the best, being inform-
 “ed of the rude reception the Empress had
 “given to his brethren, refused to wait upon
 “her.” He then made a part of the speech
 above-mentioned. “At which the Empress
 “being offended, she made her complaints to
 “the Emperor, who told her in a very laconic
 “manner to go and spin with the maids in
 “the palace.” From this concise relation it
 may be concluded that this haughty beha-
 viour was peculiar to Leontius alone, since
 no other prelate was accused of it. Where-
 fore the decent deportment of the other bi-
 shops ought to have impressed on the mind of
 Julian a more favorable opinion of the true
 spirit of christianity, than the supercilious
 behaviour of one man. Another reason,
 which M. de Voltaire assigns for the apostacy
 of

of Julian, he ascribes to his education. "He
 "was educated," says he, "by philosophers, who
 "rivetted in his heart that aversion for christi-
 "tianity, which the abuses of its membets
 "must have inspired him with." This evi-
 dently proves how dangerous a philosophic
 education is to youth. Young men are taught
 to remark the real or pretended abuses of re-
 ligion, but not the advantages which society
 derives from the benevolent lessons it incul-
 cates. M. de Voltaire however forgot him-
 self when he assigns this as a reason for Ju-
 lian's apostasy. He was not educated by those
 he calls philosophers. Eusebius bishop of
 Nicomedia, as has been remarked, was one of
 his first masters, and he confesses himself that
 he was a christian till he attained the age of
 twenty years. Had Julian been really a phi-
 losopher, he might easily have distinguished
 between the rational system of christianity,
 and the extravagance of paganism. He might
 have discriminated the advantages from the
 abuses which every institution is liable to.
 Lastly, M. de Voltaire affirms that Julian
 must have had a great predilection for the
 pacific spirit of the pagan religion, which in
 no respect fettered the mind with articles of
 faith, or prescribed any positive act of reli-
 gion.

gion. Here he speaks out; and thus justifies the remark made at the beginning of this little essay. They are the precepts of the christian code which alienate the minds of proud philosophers, because they do not square with that un-restrained and licentious liberty they so eagerly wish to enjoy.

To return to our subject after this long digression. It may be observed that the lessons of the gospel, by the testimonies of its greatest enemies, wrought a most surprising revolution in the morals and manners of mankind. They eradicated the most detestable vices, and gave birth to the most eminent virtues. Such an astonishing change from vice to virtue could be the work of God alone. St. Paul, in his 1st Epistle to the Corinthians expressly declares that the christian religion was to be founded on the destruction of the human passions. Whence it could not fail to draw down a heavy persecution on those who adopted it. It is what the divine Legislator himself foretold they should suffer for his sake.

Yet as the christian religion maintains no principles derogatory to the rights of sovereigns, or to society, and as the Romans did
not

not * always molest people on account of their religious principles, it is rather surprising

* Because they did not *always* molest people for their religious principles, it does not follow that they allowed an *universal toleration*, as M. de Voltaire, and after him the author of the Decline and Fall, &c. (p. 451.) has asserted. On the contrary, we find the Roman laws very severe in that respect. "Strange gods shall not be worshipped." (12 Tables.) Does a tolerating government express itself thus? In tracing the history of this people we find the same prohibition renewed in the year of the city 325, (see Livy, lib. 9. No. 30.) and the Ediles charged to see them duly observed. These prohibitions were issued again in the year 529, (Lib. 25. No. 5.); the Ediles severely rebuked for having neglected these orders, and other magistrates appointed to see that the laws were better executed. We find the worship of Serapis and Isis, which had secretly crept into the capital, forbidden, and their chapels demolished by the Consuls in the year 336, (Valerius Maximus, lib. 4.) many decrees of Pontiffs, and of the Senate against new modes of worship in 566, (Livy, lib. 39. No. 16.) and the worship of Jupiter Sabazius proscribed in 633. With regard to this worship, the wise Rollin observes that in every period instances may be found of the attention of the Romans to keep off every sort of superstition. Yet M. de Voltaire, and those who copy after him, assert coolly and without exception, that the Romans *adopted the maxims of universal toleration*. This intolerant spirit however was not confined to the ancient republic, but prevailed equally under the emperors; witness the counsels of Mæcenæ to Augustus against all such as should introduce, or honor

sing that they should have persecuted the christians with such inflexible cruelty; for it was not till after they had spilt torrents of blood without effect, for nearly the space of three hundred years, that they granted peace to the christian name.

To treat this subject in a proper manner, it will be expedient, 1st, To lay open the true cause of these persecutions; and 2dly, To shew to what excess of cruelty they were car-

honor in Rome, other Gods than those of the empire. "Honor the Gods," says he, "with care, according to the customs of your ancestors, and *compel* others to honor them. *Hate* those who innovate in religion, and *punish* them, not only on account of the Gods, for he that despises them has no respect for any thing, but because they who introduce new Gods, prevail on many persons to follow strange laws, and that from thence arise associations by oath, cabals, parties, all things dangerous in a state. Suffer no atheists, or magicians." (Dion Cassius, lib. 42.) Witness the Egyptian superstitions proscribed under this emperor, (ibid. lib. 54.) and under Tiberius; the Jews also banished, if they would not renounce their religion. (Tacit. Annal. lib. 2. No. 85.) But witness above all the Christians driven into exile, stripped of their property, and given up for a long time, and in such great numbers, to the most cruel torments, *not for their crimes*, but their religion. (See Pliny's Letter to the Emp. Trajan, Tacitus's account of the fire of Rome, Suetonius and others.)

ried. From whence we may judge that there never was a cause more innocent, more just, or more holy than that which the christians suffered for; and that it was Almighty God alone who could inspire them with such invincible courage, such unwearied constancy, as naturally was above all human strength whatever.

Religion was the *sole crime* of the Christians. We have proved it. The only cause of their sufferings was the courageous and persevering constancy they exhibited in refusing to adore the Gods of the empire. The edicts of the emperors, and the sentences of condemnation pronounced against the martyrs, afford the most positive evidence. We need only produce a few of them to ascertain the fact.

From * Eusebius of Cæsaria we learn that
 “ the emperors Dioclesian and Maximian were
 “ resolved

* He was a Grecian bishop, and a learned church historian of the 4th century, According to the modern commodious fashion of writing, we may either admit or reject his authority. In page 458, note 22, of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, we read that “ the learned Eusebius may be more safely relied upon than “ the vehement Tertullian.” And in page 583 we are told, that no reliance whatever can be made upon what

“resolved to bring back into the right way
 “those who had deserted it, and to force them
 to

he says; for the author describes him as “a courtly
 “bishop, a writer who has violated one of the funda-
 “mental laws of history ... an ambiguous equivocator.”
 (Note 181. p. 87.) Thus has his predecessor Voltaire
 treated Herodotus. In his Philosophical Dictionary he
 calls him “a story-teller, fit only to amuse children.”
 But this is only, like the foregoing author, when he makes
 against himself, for on other occasions, when it suits his
 conveniency, he extols his authority to the skies. (See
 Art. Circumcision.) We may also admit, or reject the
 testimony of Lactantius in the same manner. We read
 in the Decline and Fall, &c. p. 392. note 107. that
 “Lactantius may sometimes be admitted as an evidence
 “of public facts, though very seldom of private anec-
 “dotes.” And in page 401 we are told “if it were
 “possible to rely on the partial testimony of an injudi-
 “cious writer,” viz. Lactantius. In page 583 the au-
 thor of the Decline and Fall, &c. asks what reliance we
 can have “on the gravest of the ecclesiastical historians,
 “when Eusebius himself very frankly confesses that he
 “has related whatever might redound to the glory, and
 “that he has suppressed all that could tend to the dis-
 “grace of religion?” The same it may be answered
 as he gives, and as his master Voltaire gave before him
 to the life of Julian written by Ammianus Marcellinus,
 who expressly declares that he has “suppressed certain
 “facts derogatory to the character of his hero.” That
 author positively says, speaking of these letters (to which
 he applies the epithets *objurgatorias* & *mordaces*) which
 Julian

“to worship the Gods of the empire. But
 “that the Christians exposed themselves by
 “their obstinacy and perverseness to the pe-
 “nalties denounced against them, as neither
 “the equity of the imperial mandates, or the
 “fear of punishment could withdraw them
 “from their purpose.” (Epistola Sabini in
 Hist. Eccles. Eusebii, cap. 1. lib. ix. p. 284.)

Eusebius moreover gives us also in his Ecclesiastical History (lib. 8.) part of an edict of the Emperor Maximin, which runs as follows.

“Our predecessors, Dioclesian and Maxi-
 “mian, perceiving that such numbers became
 “Christians, proclaimed, and with good rea-
 “son, that those who had forsaken the reli-
 “gion of their country should be compelled
 “to return to it.” By a subsequent edict it
 was ordained that the “Christians should be

Julian wrote to Constantius, “*quere feriem nec scrutari
 “licuit, nec si licuisset proferre decebat in publicum.*”
 (Lib. xx.) It would have redounded equally to the credit of some modern philosophers if they had adopted the same wise precautions. We should then have seen less obscenity in the works of M. de Voltaire, and not have been offended by the idle and indecent note concerning Proculus and his hundred Sarmatian virgins, besides several such like anecdotes in the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.

“deprived of their dignities, condemned to
 “the torture, and excluded from the benefit of
 “the law.” (*Lactantius de Mort. Persecut.
 p. 862.) Fifty years before this period “the
 “Emperor Valerian commanded that all the
 “bishops and priests should be put to death;
 “that the senators, the Roman knights and
 “men of quality should be deprived of their
 “estates and honors; and if, after this, they
 “persisted to practise the christian religion,
 “they should be put to death also.” († Cyprian)

* He was born about the beginning of the 4th century, and was the disciple of Arnobius. Constantine made him preceptor to his eldest son Crispus in consequence of the great reputation he had acquired for his virtue and learning. He taught rhetoric publicly, and with great applause both in Africa and at Nicomedia. Of all the ecclesiastical writers in the Latin language, he is looked upon as the most eloquent. Hence he has been surnamed *Tullius Christianus*, or the christian Cicero.

† Cyprian was a native of Carthage, and a son of one of the richest families of that city. There he taught rhetoric with great applause before he became a christian. After his conversion he took the name of Cecilius out of gratitude to the priest who had converted him. After the death of Donatus bishop of Carthage, he was elected to that see in the year 248, but was obliged to leave the city about two years afterwards on account of the persecution of Decius. From the place of his retreat he wrote several pious and instructive letters to his people and

priani Epist. 80. p. 237.) This edict specifies every kind of punishment which was to be inflicted on the Christians.

By

and clergy. On his return to Carthage, he held several councils to regulate the penance which those who had fallen in the persecution were to undergo, and on several other points of discipline. In the year 257 he was banished from Carthage during the persecution of Valerian; but eleven months afterwards was permitted to reside in his gardens near that city. He was however soon after arrested, and taken before the Proconsul; when generously professing himself a christian he was condemned to be beheaded. Such a character as Cyprian's was sure never to escape the censure of modern philosophy. With a partiality peculiar to itself his faults have been enlarged upon (for who is exempt from them?) and his virtues suppressed. To notice them all would greatly exceed the bounds of a note. One wilful misrepresentation will be sufficient, if not to invalidate every thing, at least will make the reader cautious of what he admits. M. de Voltaire, descanting upon the article *baptism*, says that "the question was put to St. Cyprian if those were
 "really baptized whose bodies had only been sprinkled
 "with water. His answer was, that it was the opinion
 "of many churches that they were not christians; but
 "for his part he thought they were, although they had
 "received *a much less measure of grace* than those who had
 "been dipped thrice in the water, according to custom." For this M. de Voltaire quotes Cyprian's 67th Letter. In Bishop Fell's edition of Cyprian we find the passage alluded to in his 69th Letter, p. 185; but his decision on
 the

By an edict of the Emperor Galerius in 305, it was ordained that the Christians should be made to suffer every mode of torture, and afterwards be burnt at slow fires. (Lactantius, p. 874.) The famous letter of Pliny to Trajan, and that emperor's answer, prove to us that the Christians were persecuted *solely* for their attachment to their religion. "Must
 "the Christians," says Pliny, "be punished
 "for the *name*," (observe that) "although
 "otherwise innocent? or is the *name* itself so
 "flagitious as to be punishable?—I tried to
 "gain the truth even by torture from two
 "women, who were said to officiate at their
 "worship; but I could discover only an ob-
 "stinate kind of superstition carried to great
 "excess." (Pliny translated by the Earl of Orrery, vol. 2. p. 427.) Trajan returned for answer: "The Christians need not be sought
 "after: If they are brought into your pre-
 "sence and convicted, they must be punish-

the subject is quite the reverse to that stated by the French poet: for amongst many other reasons he gives in contradiction to what M. de Voltaire advances, he positively says that *the gifts of God cannot be divided*. To suppose them therefore to have received *less grace, is an error*. These are the express words Cyprian makes use of.

"ed."

“ed.” (Ibid. p. 428.) Such was the answer of the mild Trajan; mild indeed, if compared to the generality of the Roman emperors! But is it not the height of injustice to punish people for no other crime than that of adhering to the dictates of their consciences, when in other respects they are quiet and peaceable subjects? We see that they were accused of no other crime whatever but a firm adherence to their religion.

Dion Cassius, and other pagan authors, give us a circumstantial detail of their sufferings under Domitian; and from Tacitus and Suetonius we learn the barbarous and cruel treatment they experienced under the Emperor * Nero. Thus it appears beyond a

* Here again we may take our choice. Either to suppose Nero to have been a monster of cruelty and wickedness with all the world, both ancient and modern, or a man of a humane and benevolent disposition: for we read both these assertions in the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. In page 81 he is called the *profligate* and *cruel* Nero; and in page 533 he is complimented with the epithets of the *prudent* and *humane* Nero. These certainly are contradictions. What matter? Although they may be disagreeable to some readers, yet they are very useful to some writers. They reap this advantage at least from them, that they must necessarily be in the right, either when they deny, or when they affirm.

doubt,

doubt, that the profession of that religion constituted the sole crime of the Christians.

In the first ages of christianity every member professing that religion might look upon himself as a victim devoted one day to seal his faith with his blood, and to expire in torments. The dreadful examples which the Christians daily had before their eyes exhibited a lively, though melancholy picture of what they had to expect. The Emperor Nero, whose very name excites horror and detestation, in spite of the advocates he has found in later times, was the first who embued his hands in christian blood. It is in the following manner the historian Tacitus describes the horrible torments which he caused them to suffer. He says that “Nero
 “to suppress the prevailing rumour of his
 “having set fire to Rome, transferred the
 “guilt upon fictitious criminals, and subjected
 “to the most exquisite tortures, and doomed
 “to executions singularly cruel those people,
 “who under the vulgar appellation of Chris-
 “tians were hated for their very name. The
 “founder of this sect was Christ, who in the
 “reign of the Emperor Tiberius had suffered
 “death by the sentence of the Procurator
 “Pontius Pilate.—By the declaration of those
 who

“ were first seized, and had confessed them-
 “ selves Christians, they discovered a great
 “ number of others.—They died in torments,
 “ and their torments were imbittered by in-
 “ sult and derision. Some were nailed to
 “ crosses; other sewn up in skins of wild
 “ beasts, and exposed to the fury of dogs:
 “ others again, smeared over with combusti-
 “ ble materials, were used as torches to
 “ illuminate the night. Hence it proceeded
 “ that towards the miserable sufferers, how-
 “ ever guilty, and justly deserving the most
 “ exemplary death.” (For why? For their
 very name, and for no other crime.) “Po-
 “ pular commiseration arose, as for people
 “ who with no view to the utility of the state,
 “ but only to gratify the bloody spirit of one
 “ man, were doomed to perish.” (Annals
 translat. by Gordon, vol. 2. p. 199.) Yet, as
 Tacitus further informs us, “ nothing could
 “ acquit Nero of the charge, which was uni-
 “ versally believed that by him the conflagra-
 “ tion was authorised.” (Ibid.) Let modern
 sceptics reflect on these lines of Tacitus.
 Will they then presume to say that the cru-
 elties committed on the Christians are the
 effect of religious exaggeration? The au-
 thor of the Decline and Fall of the Roman
 O Empire

Empire endeavours to extenuate this passage of Tacitus, by insinuating that the Christians were legally condemned for crimes committed against the state. With what success he has performed the task, is left to the decision of the reader. The original words of Tacitus are, "igitur primo correpti qui *fatebantur*, "deinde indicio eorum multitudo ingens," which he renders thus in English. "The confession of those who were seized, discovered a great number of their *accomplices*." In what? Gordon the translator of Tacitus saw no word of that import, nor does the sense of the passage warrant it. "By the declaration of those who were first seized," says Gordon, "and had *confessed themselves Christians*, they discovered a great number of others." Again, Tacitus says, "*miseratio oriebatur, tanquam non utilitate publicâ, sed in sævitiam unius absumerentur*," which the author of the Decline and Fall, &c. translates as follows. "Those wretches were sacrificed not so much to the rigour of *justice* as to the cruelty of a jealous tyrant." (P. 534.) Gordon however differs with him again in his translation, when he says "popular commiseration arose as for people who with no other view to the utility of the state, but only to gratify

“tify the bloody spirit of one man were “doomed to perish.” Is there a word, either in the original Latin, or in the translation by Gordon, which implies the word *justice*? Such, it may be observed, is the accuracy of modern philosophical translations, and such is the novel mode of instructing the rising generation!

When we reflect on the general disposition of the human heart, which is so frequently warped with prejudice and passion, we shall not be surprised at the harsh epithets which Tacitus makes use of when he speaks of the Christians. He was a Pagan, and as such must have conceived the greatest prejudices against them. But the immediate purpose of the present inquiry is to ascertain the veracity of the fact. The character of the author who has transmitted it to posterity precludes every doubt that can be formed on the subject. He was a man of merit in every point of view, and therefore could never betray the truth. It was by his merit that he obtained the first offices in the state. Vespasian and Titus conferred upon him the most important charges. He was made Prætor under Domitian, and Consul two years afterwards in the place of Virginius Rufus in the 97th year of

the christian æra. Pliny, the younger, who was his friend, with all the learned men of those days, speak of Tacitus and of his writings in the highest strain of panegyric. Such a character as this could never transmit a fact of such importance to posterity, without being well assured of its authenticity. It happened during his life time; and it was of such notoriety, that he must have had it from numbers who were eye-witnesses to the fact. It is likewise confirmed, as we read in the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (p. 534.) by the *diligent* and *accurate* Suetonius, as the author styles him; and here we might rest our opinion, if we did not find in the preceding page, note 30, the said Suetonius branded with the title of a *greedy translator*. Thus some people build with one hand, and pull down with the other, just as circumstances require!

The cruelties inflicted upon the christians, by most ^{of} the succeeding Emperors were not less inhuman, and barbarous. Whatever savage industry could invent to torture the human frame, was put in execution against them. The christians, Tertullian informs us, were in derision called *Sarmentitii* and *femaxii*, that is people of twigs and stakes, as they were frequently impaled alive, or burnt at
flow

flow fires. (Apol. cap. 48, p. 39.) It is impossible to peruse the account of their suffering without horror and dismay. The letters from the churches of Lyons and Vienne to the churches of Asia, (See Eusebius's Eccles. Hist. lib. 5. cap. 1, &c.) in which mention is made of the torments inflicted upon the christians, are a standing monument of the savage cruelty of the Pagans on one hand, and of the invincible courage of the martyrs on the other. Men, women and children were arraigned without distinction of age, sex, or condition; and that for the *sole* crime of their religion. Let one instance among many suffice. A delicate young woman (Blandina by name) being tormented for several hours, to make her fore swear her religion, was deaf to all the intreaties made to save her life. The only answer she gave was, *I am a christian; and we are guilty of no crime.* This anecdote rests upon the authority of Dom. Ruinart in his *Acta Martyrum*. He was a learned Benedictine monk of the congregation of St. Maur, which was fruitful in men of erudition. He collected the genuine acts of the martyrs from ancient manuscripts with great judgment and industry, which he published, and in the preface to the said work, he

he compleatly confutes our countryman Mr. Dodwell, who like the modern critics, (though with a very different view) maintained that the number of the martyrs was inconsiderable. M. de Voltaire seems to have had a great opinion of Dom. Ruinart, though (as usual) he betrays his own inconsistency, when he gives his character. He describes him to have been a *zealous, discreet, and well informed* man. Yet, he adds, that *he might have chosen his subjects with more discretion.* (Dict. Phil.) Some people may be at a loss how to reconcile these assertions. A *discreet, well-informed* man, we might naturally suppose, would not chuse his subjects without *discretion* and *judgment*. If so, why did M. de Voltaire and his transcriber, the author of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, collect so many passages from Dom. Ruinart, if they thought that he wanted both *discretion* and *judgment* to select them? But to return.

As it is astonishing that men should be capable of such barbarity towards their fellow-creatures, so we might naturally suppose, that the horrible details we have of their sufferings to be the effect of exaggeration. In this case however it is not necessary to pin our faith upon those who may be called parties in
the

the business, for the Pagans themselves give as positive evidence to the fact. No man can hesitate, after perusing the narrative of Tacitus abovementioned, to believe that the Romans were capable of the most refined cruelty. Libanius, a Pagan, and the panegyrist of Julian the apostate, in the funeral oration which he delivered in honor of that prince, gives an account of the various torments which the christians were made to suffer; and, to use his own words, he says, that "rivers of their blood was spilt." They feared, says he, that their new master, Julian, would prove more cruel to them than the preceding Emperors, *who had made them suffer the most excruciating torments*. Such is the import of his words, (Liban. in Julian. apud Fabrit. Bib. Græc. t. 7. p. 283). Thus we see that there cannot be the least rational doubt formed, of the horrible cruelties inflicted upon the christians *.

Notwithstanding these inhuman butcheries the christian religion gained ground, and

* Were there no monuments existing of the cruelties inflicted on the christians in the first, second, or third age, we are fully informed of them by Libanius, who positively declares, that they had experienced from the preceding Emperors what they feared from Julian.

spread itself with amazing rapidity. The blood of the martyrs, according to the energetic expression of Tertullian, was like a fruitful seed which produced christians by thousands. The more they strove to extirpate them, the more they multiplied: the more they sought to crush them, the more they flourished. They cut off the people by thousands; they depopulated whole towns, yet they could not extirpate them*. Eusebius makes mention of a town in Asia, which was entirely inhabited by christians, and on that account was burnt to the ground, and all the people perished in the flames. The author of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, has mentioned this fact as related by Eusebius. "In a small town," says he, "of
 "whose name and situation we are left ignorant, it should seem that the magistrates and
 "the body of the people had embraced the
 "christian faith; and *as some resistance might*
"be apprehended to the execution of the edict, the

* "We are slain," says Justin Martyr, "with the
 "sword, but we increase and multiply. The more we
 "are persecuted and destroyed, the more are added to
 "our numbers. As a vine, by being pruned and cut
 "close, shoots forth new suckers, and bears a greater
 "abundance of fruit, so it is with us." (Apol. 2).

"governor

" governor of the province was supported by
 " a numerous detachment of Legionaries.
 " On their approach the citizens threw them-
 " selves into the church, *with a resolution*
 " *either of defending with arms the sacred edifice,*
 " *or of perishing in its ruins. They indignantly*
 " *rejected the notice and permission which was*
 " *given them to retire, till the soldiers, provoked*
 " *by their obstinate refusal, set fire to the build-*
 " *ing on all sides, and consumed by this ex-*
 " *traordinary martyrdom a great number of*
 " *Phrygians with their wives and children."*

Had this period dropped from the pen of
 M. de Voltaire no body would be surpris'd,
 because embellishments are allowed generally
 to all poets. But that the author in question
 should have made such additions to the nar-
 rative of Eusebius, most people will not be
 able to reconcile to the fair and impartial task
 of an historian. He tells his readers in a note
 (160) that " the ancient Latin translator of
 " Eusebius, Rufinus, adds the important cir-
 " cumstance of the permission given to the
 " inhabitants of retiring from thence." But
 who could suppose that the author would
 have had recourse to translations, when he
 was so capable of consulting the originals, and
 when in fact he has declared that he has con-

sulted *all the originals which could elucidate his subject*. He ought to have known moreover that Rufinus has been universally reprobated for the liberties he takes in his translations. Let us therefore turn to the original, which relates the fact in a very concise manner.—
 “A certain town in Phrygia,” says Eusebius;
 “was beset by an armed force, which set fire
 “to it, and consumed the whole, with men,
 “women and children, who were then offer-
 “ing their prayers to God. And for this
 “reason, because the inhabitants of every
 “denomination were christians, and refused
 “to sacrifice to the gods when called upon.”
 (Book and chap. referred to by the author).
 Lactantius, speaking of the injustice of the Pagan judges and magistrates, says that “one
 “of them caused a whole town, with all its
 “inhabitants and the church to be burnt.”
 We find in neither of these accounts the words of the author, which are marked in Italics. They are indisputably his own property, and in consequence an imposition upon the uninformed reader.

Eusebius cites likewise a letter of Maximin's to the magistrates of Tyre, wherein he congratulates them for having driven the christians from their walls and country. (lib. 9. cap.

9. cap. xi. p. 249.) But to what purpose all this barbarity? To what effect this obstinate rage, this unrelenting fury? So far from suppressing the christian religion, half the world becomes members of it before the deaths of the tyrants themselves; in spite of their power, and in spite of the torrents of blood, which their savage barbarity caused them to shed.

A real philosopher; the man who is acquainted with the feelings and disposition of the human heart, can never attribute such astonishing and undaunted courage, such unremitting perseverance to prejudice, bigotry or infatuation. Three centuries of torments of various kinds suffered voluntarily, patiently and courageously! The natural strength and disposition of men goes not thus far. We must therefore look for some other cause. This necessarily leads us to acknowledge the interposition of a supernatural power. The Pagans, unable to account for the intrepidity and persevering courage of the martyrs, deemed it a *perverse* and *inveterate* obstinacy. Such was the opinion of Pliny, as has been shown, of Suetonius and others. "I could discover
"only" says the former, "an obstinate kind
"of superstition carried to great excess."

The incredulous, to invalidate these facts, take another method to deprive the christian religion of this striking proof of its divinity. "If the christian religion," say they, "have had its martyrs, other religions have had theirs. The former therefore can draw no conclusions in their favor, but what will equally apply to the latter." To prove the fallacy of this mode of reasoning, we need only compare the martyrs of christianity with the pretended martyrs of other religions, for their virtues, numbers, quality, perseverance, and exclusively for the motives which animated their courage. As to their virtues the testimony of Pliny has already been adduced, Julian the apostate, and many other Pagans have likewise acknowledged that innocence of behaviour, the love of justice, patience, temperance, and every moral virtue characterized the adorers of Jesus Christ. "You cannot be a christian," said the judge Gaius to Afra, (who before her conversion had led a dissolute life) "for the christians never admit such into their society." (Ruinart. p. 50.) "You lately saw," said Tertullian, "when you commanded a christian to be conducted to a house of ill fame, that we have a greater terror of those crimes than of the most
"cruel

“cruel torments.” (Apol. cap. ult. p. 40.) It may not be improper here to observe, that the author of the Decline and Fall of the Roman empire in all his extensive reading, (for the fact is mentioned likewise by Eusebius, as well as by Tertullian whom he so often quotes) should never have met with it. He looks upon such stories as a fiction of “the monks in succeeding ages, who in their “peaceful solitudes entertained themselves “with diversifying the deaths and sufferings “of the primitive martyrs. They frequently “invented torments of a much more refined “and ingenious nature. In particular it has “pleased them to suppose that the zeal of the “Roman magistrates, disdaining every consideration of moral virtue or public decency, “endeavoured to seduce those whom they were “unable to vanquish, and that by their orders “the most brutal violence was offered to those “whom they found it impossible to seduce. “Indeed we should not neglect to remark that “the most ancient, as well as the most authentic memorials of the church are seldom polluted with these extravagant and indecent “fictions.” (p. 554.) Tertullian reproached them however, and so did Eusebius, as has been observed, with this refined cruelty.

Surely

Surely they were ancient historians? The former lived in the second century, and died about the year 216 of the christian æra. Eusebius lived in the third century, and died in 338. They were both contemporary with the facts they relate, and therefore were prior to the monks of succeeding ages in their peaceful solitudes, as described by the author. The said author, speaking of the apologies which Tertullian and others presented to the Roman Senate in behalf of their sect, says (p. 517.) "that "it is doubtful whether any of the Pagan philosophers perused the apologies "which the primitive christians repeatedly "published in behalf of themselves and of "their religion; but it is much to be lamented "that such a cause was not defended by abler "advocates." Surely the author overlooked this period when he asserts a few pages afterwards (vir. 528.) that "the perusal of the "ancient apologies was sufficient to remove "even the slightest suspicion from the mind "of a candid adversary." Though these two assertions do not *entirely* agree, yet the latter is perfectly conformable to the general opinion of the learned. Quadratus was a disciple of the apostles, and bishop of Athens in the year 126. He presented an apology in favor

favor of the christians in 131, upon which the Emperor Adrian put a stop to the persecution. There are only a few fragments of this apology extant. During the persecution of Severus, Tertullian published the apology above-mentioned, which has always been deemed a master-piece of eloquence and learning. Justin Martyr, presented two apologies in favor of the christians; the first addressed to the Emperor Antoninus, the successor of Adrian; the other to Marcus Aurelius against Crescentius who had calumniated them. It is said of Justin that he was an ornament to the christian religion by his learning, his virtues and the purity of his doctrines.

The number of christians who voluntarily shed their blood rather than depart from their faith must be a matter of astonishment to every reflecting mind. It has been shown what Libanius has recorded of those dreadful butcheries. The horrid executions have also been described which took place at Lyons under Marcus Aurelius. We have seen likewise the edicts of Valerian, which denounced death against all the christians without distinction of age, sex or condition. It has been stated, that during the reigns of Dioclesian and Maximian, and that of Galerius
and

and Maximin, the christians were sacrificed by thousands, insomuch that this period of time has ever since been denominated the *æra of the martyrs*. It is needless therefore to recapitulate the persecutions of Nero, Domitian, Decius and others, who were more or less professed enemies to the christian name.

To discredit however the idea that such numbers of christians were sacrificed for their faith, although supported by incontrovertible documents, Mr. Dodwell, and after him M. de Voltaire, and his transcriber the author of the *Decline and Fall of the Roman empire* have brought forward a fragment from Origen. "Origene," says M. de Voltaire, "dans son
"livre troisieme contre Celse dit: on peut
"facilement compter les chrétiens qui son
"mort pour la religion, parcequ'il en est
"mort peu, et seulement des tems en tems,
"et par intervalle." The transcriber affirms that "the learned Origen, who from his ex-
"perience, as well as reading, was intimately
"acquainted with the history of the christians,
"declares in the most exprefs terms that the
"number of martyrs was very inconsiderable." They both support their argument from the following lines of Origen. "Pauci per inter-
"valla temporum, et facile numerabiles pro
"religione

“religione christiana sunt mortui.” They omit however the remainder of the sentence, which fully explains the meaning of Origen. “Deo vetante ne in totum excinderetur hoc genus hominum.” “God not permitting that the whole race of christians should be cut off.” It is proper to observe that Origen wrote against Celsus a whole year before the persecution of Decius, and a long time before that of Dioclesian, both the one and the other more cruel and bloody than the preceding ones. Origen, in the above-mentioned passage, compares the number of those who laid down their lives for their religion with those whom Almighty God had preserved. No doubt but the former were inferior to the latter, yet it does not prove that the number of martyrs was *very inconsiderable*, whatever it might have been at the moment he was speaking of, otherwise his words *Deo vetante, God not permitting* (which the philosophers have omitted) would be rank nonsense: for in that supposition there could be no fear of the “whole race of christians being cut off.” It may not be improper in this place to give a few outlines of Origen’s character. He has always been looked upon as one of the greatest and most learned men of the pri-

mitive church. He was born at Alexandria in the year 185 of the christian æra, and was surnamed *Adamant*, not only on account of his indefatigable application and industry in learning, but for his courageous resolution under torments for the christian faith. His father Leonidas had suffered death for the same cause during the persecution of the emperor Severus in the year 202. Origen had in his school a great number of disciples, some who were christians, and others pagans. He fortified the former in their faith and converted great numbers of the latter. So many of these laid down their lives for the cause that his school was denominated the school of martyrs. During the persecution of Decius in 249 he was made to suffer the most cruel torments which he bore with a patience and fortitude beyond the appearance of human strength. They were the more insupportable, as they were made to last for a long space of time, preventing with a cruel and un-remitting industry the death of the suffering victim. He did not however survive this inhuman treatment long, for he died at Tyre in the year 254 at the age of 69, during the reign of the Emperors Gallus and Volsian. Several excellent works he has left behind him, particularly

cularly that against Celsus, a passage out of which has been the subject of the abovesaid discussion.

If we attend to the quality of those who shed their blood for the faith of Christ we shall be still more astonished than at their numbers. The author of the *Decline and Fall of the Roman empire* particularly notices one. "Adauctus who was of a noble family in Italy, "and had raised himself through the successive honors of the palace.—He is the more "remarkable for being the *only* person of rank "and condition who appears to have suffered "during the course of this general persecution." (p. 577.) But surely the author forgot that he had previously mentioned in p. 564. "the principal eunuchs, Lucian and "Doritheus, Gorgonius, Andrew, who all attended the person, possessed the favor, "and governed the household of Dioclesian." They, as we learn both from Eusebius (*Hist. eccles. lib. 8. cap. 6. p. 242*) and Lactantius (*cap. 15, p. 863.*) were all put to the most cruel death. Surely they were persons of rank and distinction?

Among the martyrs we find learned men, and philosophers of the first class; senators, and officers of superior rank both in civil and

military capacities ; relations likewise of the emperors themselves, as Flavius Clemens of the family of Domitian ; Marius, who, by his epitaph, is stiled *dux militum* ; Sebastian, a captain of the guards under Dioclesian ; Cantianus, who was of an ancient Consular family ; Marcellus, Hermias, officers in the legions ; Andronicus, one of the first families in Ephesus, &c.

There are many observations to be made upon this period. Having stated that among the martyrs many learned men and *philosophers* are to be found, we nevertheless see that the author of the Decline and Fall of the Roman empire (p. 517.) expressing his surprise at “the inattention of the pagan and “philosophic world to those evidences which “were presented by the hand of omnipotence, “not to their reason, but to their senses.” We find however that those, whose hearts were not too stubborn to yield to conviction, were not inattentive to those evidences. Was not Justin Martyr a philosopher ? Were not Arnobius, Athanagoras, and many others, who might be named, philosophers ? They certainly were not inattentive to these miraculous facts which they saw with their own eyes, for they embraced christianity in consequence
of

of what they had seen. Are we to suppose that they renounced their pride, so dear to a philosopher; that they gave up every comfort of life, and even life itself for a chimera; for a system, destitute of every rational evidence? This would be a greater prodigy than any they saw with their own eyes.

Marcellus, a captain of Dioclesian's guards, as abovementioned, is another object of the censure of M. de Voltaire, and, after him, of the author of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. The former says, "Mar-
 " celle jetta par terre sa ceinture et ses armes,
 " disent tout haut qu'il étoit Chretien, et qu'il
 " ne voulut plus servir les Payens." (Exam. Imp. chap. 26. p. 144.) The latter expresses himself thus on the same subject. Marcellus was deserving of death "for having thrown
 " away his belt, his arms and the ensigns of
 " his office, and for exclaiming with a loud
 " voice that he would obey none but Jesus
 " Christ, the Eternal King, and that he re-
 " nounced for ever the use of carnal weapons,
 " and the service of an idolatrous master."
 (P. 567.) The words of Marcellus we find to be much enlarged upon, and his justification suppressed, as the reader will readily perceive. "If such," says Marcellus, "are the
 " terms

“ terms of service that we must offer sacrifice
 “ to the gods and to the emperors, I renounce
 “ the profession.” Is it not evident that
 Marcellus only threw up the profession, be-
 cause he was called upon to do that which his
 conscience forbade him to comply with. And
 what proves it beyond the shadow of a doubt,
 is the circumstance of the moment in which
 Marcellus then found himself. For they
 were then *sacrificing*, as the original (Ruinart)
 expressly states, from which both authors
 have extracted the narrative. This disinge-
 nuous and uncandid manner of treating a sub-
 ject naturally reminds us of another from the
 fertile brain of the French poet. “ St. Law-
 “ rence,” says he, “ deserved to be punished
 “ for refusing to pay to the Prefect of Rome
 “ the contributions levied for the public
 “ charges, and for having insulted the empe-
 “ ror by bringing a knot of paupers to him
 “ instead of money.” (Exam. Imp. p. 145.)
 St. Lawrence, notwithstanding all that M. de
 Voltaire has said to depreciate his character,
 has ever been recognized for one of the most
 illustrious martyrs who suffered for Jesus
 Christ. He was the first deacon in the church
 of Rome, and appointed by Pope Sixtus II.
 to distribute the alms, with which the church

was

was intrusted for the maintenance of the poor*. The Emperor Valerian having published a severe edict against the Christians, Pope Sixtus was arrested. As they were conveying him to execution, St. Lawrence followed him bathed in tears. "Where are you going," said he, "without your son and your servant?" Pope Sixtus replied; "A greater conflict, my dear son, is reserved for you. In three days you will follow me." St. Lawrence, consoled by these words prepared himself for death. He distributed all the money with which he was intrusted for the benefit of the poor, and even sold the plate belonging to the church for that purpose. Upon this Cornelius Secularis, the Prefect of Rome, who was as greedy of gold, as he was of the innocent blood of the Christians, sent for St. Lawrence, and asked him *where were the treasures of the church?* saying that the Emperor had need of them to pay his troops. St. Lawrence requested a respite of three days to give his answer. During this time he collected all the poor, whom the

* There were no tithes at this period. The patrimony of the church was divided into three parts, one of which was appropriated to the maintenance of the poor.

church had used to maintain. He presented them to Cornelius, saying, "Here, Sir, are the treasures of the church." The Prefect's avarice being thus disappointed, he ordered him to be scourged, and afterwards broiled upon a gridiron, which was put in execution on the 10th of August in the year 258. Thus we see that the question was not relative to the contribution of a public tax, but to an *arbitrary* demand of an avaricious magistrate. St. Lawrence, who was only the trustee of these charities, could not betray the confidence reposed in him. To show to the Prefect the number of the poor who were maintained by the alms of the church, and consequently the laudable application of those alms certainly was no insult: but most assuredly it is wrong in any author to endeavour thus to impose on the credulity of his readers.

Among the martyrs we likewise find ladies of the first distinction, as Flavia Domitilla, Perpetua of Carthage, Sabina, Cæcilia, &c. Also a multitude of aged men, who presented their stiff and frozen limbs to the executioners. We see youths, who had scarcely tasted the pleasures of life, when they were eager to sacrifice it rather than depart from their faith. Once more, let it be asked; Is it

it possible for prejudice, bigotry, or infatuation to inspire such heroism, such undaunted courage, such perseverance, such intrepidity among every class and condition? And if it is not necessary absolutely to attribute such unparalleled exertions of the human frame to the aid and support of divine and supernatural power? For nearly three hundred years, (with however from time to time some little relaxation) were the enemies to the christian name implacable, the executioners indefatigable, and the Christians invincible.

Lastly, that which distinguishes the martyrs of the christian faith from all others whatsoever, was the motive of their sufferings. It is natural to inquire on what foundation these motives were grounded. On facts. These were the motives which induced them to renounce their favorite opinions and the prejudices of their education; to change their course of life, and mode of thinking; to embrace a system repugnant to the natural inclinations of men; a system, which in fact wages war against every passion. These were the springs, and source of all their courage and intrepidity, their comfort and support in torments. Wide is the difference between facts and opinion. We may easily be pre-

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possessed

possessed with a false opinion, suppose it true, become insensibly bigotted to it, and at length be ready to sacrifice every thing rather than depart from it. But it is quite different in regard to facts, of which we have ocular demonstration. The senses judge of these, and as long as we have the right use of our reason, we do not take the phantoms and illusions of the brain for realities. Nothing then but voluntary error can deceive us in point of facts. Where is the man to be found amongst the pretended martyrs of false religions, who died in attestation of the facts he himself saw? Thousands of the primitive Christians on the contrary laid down their lives, rather than depart from a religion which they saw with their own eyes supported by divine power. "We cannot," (said St. Paul, Acts iv. 20.) "but speak of the things which we have seen, and heard."

The Jews and Pagans, who believed upon the testimony of the apostles, were assured of the facts they related, because they saw with their own eyes the miracles which they wrought in attestation of them. The Christians in the 2d and 3d age were in the same situation with those of the first. They laid down their lives in support of truths verified by facts,
which

which they had seen also. This argument alone, were there no other, is sufficient to show the essential difference between the christian martyrs and the pretended martyrs of other religions. The former were martyrs to a religion founded upon facts : the latter were martyrs to opinion. These were persuaded by theory ; those by reality.

However amiable the christian religion might have appeared in theory, it is not natural that men should have been induced to embrace it. On the contrary, it is certain that they should have had the greatest repugnance to it, notwithstanding the superior excellence of those moral virtues which it inculcates. They must have been shocked at the novelty and incomprehensibility of many of its doctrines. They must have been terrified likewise at the austerity of its precepts, and the rigorous and everlasting punishments which it denounces against those illicit pleasures they had been accustomed to enjoy. Nevertheless they embraced it. What could effect such a wonderful change in the hearts of men ? What could induce them to act diametrically opposite to the feelings and inclinations of human nature ? Nothing but palpable facts ; facts which they saw with their own eyes.

The finger of God appearing visibly in support of it, removed every doubt, and every difficulty whatever.

There are three events which have come to pass in the world which must appear astonishing to every man of reflexion, and almost incredible, were they not ascertained beyond the possibility of a doubt. The first is, the universality of a religion so absurd, so impious as idolatry: the second, the extent of a religion so gross and stupid as Mahometism: the third, the establishment of a religion so repugnant to the passions and inclinations of mankind as christianity. Without departing from the order of natural causes, we can account for the two former. But these causes will not suffice to reconcile the latter to us. The christian religion therefore is the only one, the establishment of which can, and ought to be ascribed to a supernatural power. Idolatry took its rise from ignorance and the depraved passions of mankind. Mahometism diffused itself by violence and the force of arms. Christianity owes its existence to invincible patience and courageous perseverance, superior to every human consideration whatever.

It is not however impossible but that at times, and in particular circumstances a person may be found so bigotted to his opinions, so puffed up with pride and vanity as to brave death in every shape, rather than retract his favorite system. Thus we have seen conspirators undergo the most excruciating tortures, rather than impeach their accomplices. Yet such examples are rare, and are phenomena which seldom appear. But it is not in the course of nature, or merely possible that thousands of people of every age, sex, and condition, should forego the advantages of life, and suffer voluntarily and freely the most excruciating torments, if they were not compelled by supreme motives, and supported by supernatural aid and assistance. The christian martyrs (it cannot be too often repeated) therefore were sustained and supported by divine power, it being impossible otherwise in nature for human strength to withstand such trials. It was in consequence of this divine assistance that we may, and ought to ascribe the noble reply of a woman (Felicita by name) who was a prisoner, and condemned to die for her faith. This woman, who was eight months gone with child, being seized with pains incident to her condition, could

not

not refrain expressing them. The jailor, perceiving her uneasiness, said, "If you cannot help crying out at present, how will you be able to face the wild beasts, which you so lately seemed to despise, when you was called forth to sacrifice?" "Oh," she replied, "I have only natural strength to support me under natural pains and infirmities, but the divine power of Jesus Christ will support me under torments, when I shall be called forth to suffer for his sake." (Ruinart, p. 93).

Such will always be the reply of those who act by principle; of those who follow the dictates of conscience, and of those who are intimately persuaded of the *one only thing necessary*, which their divine Master has recommended to them. Conscientious rectitude is not confined to any age or climate. The divine assistance, which the primitive christians most assuredly experienced in their conflicts, will never be wanting to those who engage in the same cause. Were other proofs wanting, we need only turn our eyes towards France. There we shall find that one hundred and thirty-eight archbishops and bishops, sixty-four thousand clergymen were driven from their sees and their parishes, and left to starve, for refusing

refusing to take an oath against their consciences; that three hundred priests were massacred in one day in the city of Paris, the rest either sacrificed in other places, or banished! Out of this edifying group we will select only three distinguished personages, for brevity sake, whose meek, yet courageous deportment must excite the admiration, veneration and respect of every generous heart. These are the archbishop of Arles, (M. Dullau by name) and the two brothers of the noble family de la Rochefaucauld; the one bishop of Saintes, the other of Beauvais. These venerable prelates, with a multitude of clergymen, were conducted in the morning after the bloody tenth of August, 1792, to the Carme's church, which was destined for their prison. Here they were confined without the least refreshment till the next day, and without even a mattress to lie upon. During all this time their ears were grated by the blasphemous and obscene discourse of those who guarded them. Some time afterwards the extreme rigour of their confinement was a little mitigated, permission having been obtained that their friends and servants should supply them with such necessaries, as were indispensably requisite to keep them from perishing.

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The archbishop of Arles however had not even a mattress to himself. Being the most dignified person among the sufferers, he was of consequence, the main object of the brutal insolence of the guards, who assailed him with unremitting scurrility and abuse. One of them in particular, perceiving the aversion he had to the fumes of tobacco, smoked it in his face. The prelate, without uttering a word of complaint, arose, and changed his seat. The fellow followed him; till, wearied by the patience of the suffering victim, he gave up the pursuit. M. Dullau then fell asleep, being quite exhausted by his sufferings. These few moments however of tranquility, were soon interrupted by the cry of assassination. "Well," exclaimed the archbishop to the person who gave the alarm, "let the will of "God be done," and then calmly fell asleep again.

The same serenity (resulting from a good conscience) and composure of mind marked the conduct of the bishops of Saintes and Beauvais. At last however the fatal moment arrived. The ruffians exclaimed, "Where "is the archbishop of Arles?" They questioned a clergyman who stood near, if he was the person. With his eyes cast down, and his

his hands joined before his breast, he made no reply. Turning then to M. Dullau, they said, "you then, villain, are the archbishop of Arles." "Yes, gentlemen," he replied, "I am the archbishop of Arles, and am conscious of never having done an injury to any one." On this a blow was discharged on the archbishop's head. He stood however immovable, and without uttering the least complaint. A second blow wounded him in the face. Still he kept his ground; and without saying a single word, raised his hand to the wounded part. The third blow however brought him to the ground. No sooner was he laid prostrate than being stabbed to the heart, an end was put to his sufferings. The assassin took the prelates watch from his pocket, and transferred it into his own, as a reward for the murderous deed he had performed.

One of the villains then shot at the bishop of Beauvais, and wounded him in the thigh. Throwing him on the ground, they went in quest of his brother, whom they no sooner dispatched, than they called out to the bishop of Beauvais to arise, and take his fate. He answered them, "I do not refuse to go, and die like the others, but you see it is impossible for me to walk. I humbly beseech you

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“therefore to have the charity to assist me, to
 “go to the place where I am called.” They
 raised him up by the arms, and trailed his
 body away to the garden, where they put a
 final period to his wretched existence. This
 butchery, which lasted three hours, took place
 on Sunday the second of September, being
 the twenty-first day of their confinement.
 (For further particulars the reader is referred
 to Mr. Barruel’s statement of the facts).

To wind up his invective against the pri-
 mitive christians, the author of the *Decline
 and Fall of the Roman Empire*, tells his
 readers, that “it would be an easy task from
 “the history of Eusebius, from the declama-
 “tions of Lactantius, and from the most an-
 “cient acts, to collect a long series of horrid
 “and disgraceful pictures, and to fill many
 “pages with racks and scourges, with iron-
 “hooks and red-hot beds.” Wherefore he
 adds, “he has purposely refrained from de-
 “scribing the particular suffering and deaths
 “of the christian martyrs.” (p. 582). The
 task indeed, as he says, would be very easy,
 and what is more (which he seems to insinuate
 is not the case) we may rely confidently on the
 relations they give us, were they not, at least
 in general terms, confirmed by the Pagan
 historians

historians themselves. Their veracity stands unimpeached, unless it be by modern philosophers, whose views are too interested, too palpable to be admitted as legal evidence. But when he says "he purposely refrained from describing "the particular sufferings and deaths of the "christian martyrs," he forgot himself strangely, for we read in his history, p. 566 of Maximilian, the recruit; in p. 567 of Marcellus, the centurion; in page 570 of the christian who tore down the edict at Nicomedia, whom, he tells us, "was burnt, or "rather roasted at a slow fire." He informs his readers also, that "every mode of torture "was put in practice, and the court as well as "the city, was polluted with many bloody "executions." See likewise pages 572, 574, 577, 582, &c. &c.

We will however take the hint, although he has been so little attentive to it himself, and refrain to discant further on a subject, which is as painful to relate, as it is wonderful in its principle and edifying in its consequences.

Haviug in the course of this little Essay, occasionally remarked a few of the misrepresentations of M. de Voltaire and his disciples, it may not be amiss to lay before the reader, some of the many contradictions which ano-

ther modern philosopher (Rouffeau) has fallen into. Whence it will appear evident, that they who undertake a bad cause, only expose themselves to the ridicule and contempt of every man of sense and information. They write for fools, and among such they hope to make profelyles. M. de Voltaire has not blushed to avow it. "Les fots," fays he, "admirent tout dans un auteur eflimè." In other words, "Fools swallow every thing that flows from the pen of an admired author." M. de Velly, the French hiftorian, having read a curious anecdote in the works of M. de Voltaire, requested to know upon what authority it was grounded. The answer which he received from the French poet was as follows. "Quond il s'agit d'amuser la populace, il ne faut pas etre trop scrupuleux fur la verite."

But to return to J. J. Rouffeau. Abftracting from the eccentricity of his character, he poffeffed undoubtedly many good qualities, which moft of his fceptical brethren were ftrangers to. He was humane and charitable. His purfe, fuch as it was, was always open to the poor. Unlike M. de Voltaire, he never made a scandalous traffic of his pen and talents. He never impofed upon the public under forged and borrowed names, nor fold the

the same manuscript to several booksellers at the same time. Certainly he might have made money of his works, and might also have obtained some lucrative places, through the influence of his friends and admirers, had not his proud and cynical temper made him forego his own interests. Content with a bare mediocrity, he confined himself to what was purely necessary. Notwithstanding the paradoxes he maintained, and the errors he gave into, no one will refuse to acknowledge the superior natural, and the acquired talents he possessed. Happy would it have been for society, and particularly for the French nation at this moment, who owe in a great measure, their misery and desolation to his writings, had they taken a better turn. It is said of him, that nothing of an indifferent nature ever escaped his pen, possessing the art of presenting the most fallacious subjects under the brightest colours. Capable of supporting, or opposing the same argument in the most masterly manner, of which he was not a little proud, he wrote in favor of, and against suicide; in support of, and against duelling. He endeavoured to apologise for adultery, yet described it in the most horrible colours. The most violent invectives he levels at the
philos-

philosophers, yet he adopts their opinions. His attacks against the existence of God, he confutes by incontrovertible arguments against the Atheists. He starts the most captious objections against the christian religion, which he nevertheless extols in the highest strain of panegyric. There would be no end, if a minute detail was given of the contrarieties which are to be met with in his works. They prove indeed how far a man may be a dupe to himself when he follows only the light of his own weak reason, and how uncertain philosophy is in its ideas, when once it deviates from the bounds prescribed to it by the great Author of nature. However as it is reason alone, which J. J. Rousseau has taken for his guide, let us examine what use he has made of it.

“The God,” says he, “whom I adore, is
 “not a God of darkness. He hath not en-
 “dowed me with an understanding to forbid
 “me the use of it. To tell me I must submit
 “my reason, is to insult the author of it.”
 (Emile, t. 3. p. 139.) Thus we see that rea-
 son is all-powerful. What follows proves it
 to be the reverse. “The more I strive to
 “contemplate the infinite essence of God,
 “the less I conceive it: but it is, that is
 “enough

“enough for me: the less I conceive it, the
 “more I adore it. I humble myself, and say:
 “Being of beings, I am, because thou art:
 “to meditate on thee without ceasing, is to go
 “up to the fountain-head of my existence.
 “*The most worthy use I can make of my reason,*
 “*is to annihilate it before thee.*” (Letter p.
 54.)

Once more let us hear him in favor of
 reason. “The greatest ideas we have of the
 “Divinity come by reason alone. Behold the
 “spectacle of nature; hearken to the interior
 “voice. Hath not God said every thing to
 “our eyes, to our conscience, to our judge-
 “ment?” (Emile, t. 3. p. 122.)

Against reason. “The incomprehensible
 “Being which contains all, who gives motion
 “to the world, and forms the whole system of
 “beings, is neither visible to our eyes, nor
 “palpable to our hands; he escapes all our
 “senses. The work is seen, but the artist is
 “hid. It is no small matter to know at last
 “that he exists; and after we have got so far,
 “when we put the question to ourselves:
 “What is he? Where is he? Our mind is
 “confounded: it wanders, and we know not
 “what to think.” (Emile, t. 2. p. 313,) “He
 “is equally concealed from *my senses*, and
 “from

“*from my understanding*: the more I think of him, the more I am confounded.” (ib. t. 3, p. 58.)

So much for J. J. Rousseau’s reasons. Let us now attend to a few more contradictions, which he has unwarily fallen into, for it has often been observed that great wits have now and then short memories.

In the fine panegyric which he has made of our blessed Saviour (as related in the course of this little essay) he says “Is the tone he makes use of that of an ambitious sectary?” Yet in letter (p. 93,) he affirms, after drawing a parallel between Moses, Jesus Christ and Mahomet, that “we should not treat them as impostors. Who knows how far the continual meditations on the Deity, how far the enthusiasm of virtue in their sublime souls might disturb the didactic and crawling order of vulgar ideas. In too elevated a situation the head turns, and things are no longer seen as they are in themselves.” Thus, in the first place, we read that Jesus Christ had not the tone of an *enthusiast*, or of an *ambitious sectary*, and afterwards that it is possible his brain was turned by an enthusiasm of virtue. In the same panegyric he declares Jesus Christ to have been endowed with *the most*

most sublime wisdom ; here he is represented as a man, *who does not see things as they are in themselves !*

In speaking of the gospel (as has been noticed) J. J. Rousseau exclaims. "Is it possible that a work so simple and so sublime should be the work of man?" "And yet with all this," he adds, "the gospel is full of things incredible, repugnant to reason, and which no man of sense can conceive, or admit." Letter, p. 128.)

"We have," says he, "three principal religions in Europe. That which admits only one revelation is the most ancient and seems the most safe ; that which admits three is the most modern, and seems the most coherent ; that which admits two, and rejects the third, may perhaps be the best, but it certainly has every prejudice against it ; its incoherency stares you in the face." (Emile, t. 3. p. 140.) This period he contradicts without the least ceremony. "There is," says he, "no revelation, against which the same objections have not the same, or greater force, than they have against christianity." (t. 3, p. 188.) He tells his readers also (Soc. Comp. B. iv, chap. 8.) that "Chris-

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"tianity preaches nothing but slavery and de-
 "pendence. The spirit of it is too favorable
 "to tyranny, for the latter not to make its
 "advantage of it on every occasion. True
 "christians are formed for slaves." How is
 this period to be reconciled with what he has
 said elsewhere? viz. that "Christianity hath
 "softened slavery, and given to the manners
 "of nations a mildness and humanity which
 "letters could never have communicated to
 "them. It hath rendered the different forms
 "of government more moderate, and less fan-
 "guinary, and by that means less tottering.—
 "It hath provided for the security of masters,
 "and the happiness of subjects." (Emile, t.
 iii. p. 185.) "I am" says the same J. J.
 Rousseau, "a christian, not as a disciple of
 "priests, but as a disciple of Jesus Christ."
 A very docile disciple indeed, who can tell
 his master that "he teaches things repugnant
 "to reason; that his head is turned, and he
 "does not see things as they are in them-
 "selves!" "But whether," he adds, "I ought
 "to have kept my sentiments on these matters
 "to myself, (as they never cease telling me)
 "or whether (when I had the courage to
 "publish them under my own name) I at-
 "tacked

“tacked the laws, and disturbed the public
 “peace of society, is what I shall examine by
 “and by.” (Letter, p. 60.) Whatever his
 intentions might have been in that respect, he
 never kept his word, and he might have his
 own reasons for so doing. But he has never-
 theless taken care to condemn his own con-
 duct as usual. “I do not think,” says he,
 “that any one can lawfully introduce a new
 “religion into a country without the permis-
 “sion of the sovereign; for if it be not di-
 “rectly disobeying God, it is disobeying the
 “laws, and whoever disobeys the laws, dis-
 “obeys God.” Thus he has pointedly con-
 demned his own conduct; for what right had
 he, a foreigner as he was, to print and diffuse
 his pernicious doctrines in France?

These few contradictions and inconsisten-
 cies, among a variety of others which are to
 be found scattered throughout all his works,
 are sufficient to put every man upon his guard
 who ventures to peruse them. Let the rea-
 der never lose sight of what he says himself of
 modern philosophers, in which he certainly
 may be included, viz. that “they give us for
 “true principles of things only unintelligible
 “systems, which they have raised in their own
 “imaginations.” (Emile, t. iii, p. 149.)

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Will rational men then follow such guides? Will they rest their best hopes upon such precarious and uncertain grounds? Certainly not. They will, on the contrary, adhere to that gospel, which with respect to morality (as the said J. J. Rousseau confesses) is *always certain, always true, always singular, and always consistent with itself.*

FINIS.

